

COMMONSENSE ABOUT SEX

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

NOVELS

MARGARET PROTESTS

CAPTIVITY

HIDDEN LIVES

HARE OF HEAVEN

STRENGTH OF THE SPIRIT

SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

SOCIOLOGICAL BOOKS

FOR MY ENEMY DAUGHTER

THE WOMAN IN THE LITTLE HOUSE

FAMILY LOVE

WOMEN'S PROBLEMS OF TO-DAY

FEEDING THE FAMILY

CAREERS FOR WOMEN

COMMONSENSE ABOUT SEX

by

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“The Woman in the Little House ”

“For my Enemy Daughter ” etc. etc.

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CHOOSING YOUR PARTNER

YOU AND I are living creatures in a world full of other living creatures; they have many different shapes, many ways of expressing themselves, but all share one thing in common—the instinct to reproduce; sometimes this instinct is dammed back for various reasons and that causes terrible trouble in the individual and often makes him a menace to those round him; if everyone in the world could be educated in such a way, and if the world could be planned in such a way, that this instinct never got dammed back, I believe that there would be little cruelty, little insanity, not nearly so much unhappiness.

Where human beings differ from animals and plants in this particular matter is that most of them want to reproduce themselves a little better in their children; they want a better share of the world's good things for their children, and that is the main cause of war. Perhaps, however, if we can bring up children to have a feeling of friendliness for Life in all its forms we shall, in time, teach them that there is no need to deprive others in order to get things for our own families.

Your real adventure in life begins when you fall in love; school, work, training for work have all been adventures, but they have been largely guided by parents, teachers, employers or someone else; you had to do more or less as you were told. Education and training for your work are very important but not final; you can repair a scanty education in later life, in fact you can go on educating yourself till the day you die; often you can scrap a career for which you are not fitted and start on something quite different without causing yourself anything more serious than a little worry and financial insecurity. But an unhappy love affair can leave scars that never really heal, and a disastrous marriage may easily wreck your life. It can wreck many more lives than your own because the children of badly-mated people often turn out neurotic and anti-social and spread the contagion of unhappiness all round them.

The trouble about falling in love is that we do it at an age when the various parts that make up the human personality are not balanced; the body is growing and developing in a bewildering way, but the mind has not yet discovered itself and the spirit is probably still slumbering; the mind is a hotch-potch

of things learnt at school, things observed and impressed upon you at home, things heard on the radio, seen and heard in the cinema and read in books, and a very sad thing about many of the things seen in the cinema and read in the cheap books that boys and girls with very little money often buy, is that they are not real, true things; they are highly coloured, dishonest things made pretty and exciting to catch every possible customer and make the most possible money for the film magnate or the irresponsible publisher.

You cannot possibly know much about life in your teens—you have not lived enough. And, because of the commercial exploitation of much entertainment, what you know is largely mistaken. A boy or girl brought up in an elementary school and allowed the freedom of playing in the streets and parks, and later of associating with numbers of others in a workshop, usually knows more than the wealthier child who has been with a nurse till school days and then carefully guarded in school till he goes to the university, with holidays at home in the unnatural atmosphere of holiday time; the wealthy child segregated in boarding school knows, as a rule, pitifully little of the opposite sex; the poorer child could know more, having rubbed shoulders with others in much greater intimacy. But they are restricted by the rigid and narrow code which makes jealousy one of the most desirable virtues and forbids a boy or girl who is courting even to say "Good morning" to a member of the opposite sex; also they are restricted by a curious lack of adventurousness which makes it difficult for boys and girls in the same factory or shop, church or evening class to get to know each other; and a very surprising lack of social poise, for which their mothers are largely to blame.

But even worse than this narrow social circle is ignorance of the ordinary basic facts of human relationship. For over fifteen years I have had about 2,000 letters a month dealing with various human problems; a very common one is that of the girl who tells me her boy "wants only the one thing" and threatens to have nothing more to do with her unless she co-operates; that is, the boy wants to take a girl into a dark corner somewhere and have intercourse with her. On the other hand, the girl from sixteen upwards is almost always out to get married, usually because she says vaguely "she doesn't want to work all her life and wants more freedom". The queer thing is that the boy must have observed other boys faced with affiliation orders, and the girl surely must have seen her often dreadfully overworked mother enjoying the "freedom" of wifhood and

motherhood on a man's small wages or the dole. Perhaps the cinema has made them feel that they will be different!

But even more dangerous than these things is the tyranny of the uncontrolled, uncomprehended body. In your teens you are just beginning to realize the strength of the body and its emotions; attraction towards the opposite sex is just beginning to be felt and is sometimes so strong that it upsets the mental balance entirely.

At this period many girls get almost unbearable in the home, weepy sometimes, sometimes posing as misunderstood angels or geniuses, sometimes defiant of home authority, unwilling to co-operate in the life of the home in any way; boys become bullying and aggressive, sniggering or moody. This unpleasant behaviour is caused by the release of what are called sex hormones into the blood which carries them about the body, and the young body has not yet learnt to cope with them. At this stage of development young people need what very few get; they need parents who understand scientifically what they are going through, who are reasonable enough not to deplore or resent the loss of dear little affectionate boys and girls for those alternately haughty and terrified, snappy and appealing young things; parents who can give understanding without any of that self-gratifying sympathy or scolding and repression which either weaken the child or make him into a revolutionary; they need a level, calm, rather unexciting existence instead of their sudden introduction to the freedoms and problems of university life or of a job out in the world; they need much more sleep than the present (and pre-war) labour conditions allow them; they need better, less faddy food (but perhaps that is one good thing the war is teaching them); they need much more fun of the physical sort than most of them get. Above all, they need much more training in self-reliance and in ordinary common sense.

I believe that urban civilization and monotonous work are largely destroying common sense; it is most unusual to find the so-called "ignorant" peasant or country bumpkin so actually *silly* as the town girl or boy. And in their teens they run the risk of having this *silliness* ruin their lives. (I shall be more explicit about various sillinesses later on.)

A girl who is fairly pretty (or who can make up and have a permanent wave) and is fairly smartly dressed will so attract a boy that he loses sight of everything else for the time being, especially if a number of other boys want her; she may be completely empty-headed, she may be a coldly calculating gold

digger intent on getting a wedding ring from any man or boy and determined to give nothing in return. A boy, if he is ardent in manner, smartly dressed and "manly" (whatever that may mean) can win most girls at this period even if he is a thorough waster; the girl who makes a boy's blood feel like champagne, the boy who makes a girl's knees feel like jelly when he touches her are the mates usually chosen in the teens and the early twenties. Most of us older folks, we who are parents or grandparents, have forgotten this champagne and jelly period of our lives, but to those who are apt to get impatient with their young folks' choice of sweethearts, I can only say, "Think of that boy you were in love with when you were eighteen, or that girl for whom you would have died when you were nineteen! Can you think of anything more dreadful than having them always about you now? Do be merciful to your children who are bewitched as you were then or who are, to put it bluntly, at the mercy of their sex glands just developing."

How, then, can I choose? the boy or girl may well ask. You don't want to make a mess of marriage; you want the best out of it and you want to give the best you can. Ought you to take no notice of thrills? Ought you not to marry the one who sends quivers of excitement down the spine and into the finger tips?

In some cases that is the very person you should marry, but not very often. These exciting thrills, when they are caused by your youth and by the discovery of new emotions, will not last. There will come a time, if you get married, when troubles and difficulties crop up; you may see your wife ill and unattractive when babies are coming; she may get irritable and nagging when the children are young and tiring or household troubles obsess and overwhelm her; you may come upon a time of struggle when you have to find money to help old relatives, or when one of you has to take a rather disagreeable old relative into the home and upset its harmony for a while; you may fall into unemployment through no fault of your own, be unable to pay your mortgage on the house, unable to buy new clothes or even a dignified amount of decent food; you may see your husband drifting into drinking through worry and have to pull him out of it; either of you may be stricken with repulsive illness and have to watch the once thrilling body become, for a time, disgusting and pitiable. Thrills will not mean very much at such a time. The fairy tales which said "So they got married and lived happily ever after" are dreadfully untrue; you live happily ever afterwards only if you have

chosen the right person, and the right person is the one you can be *friendly* with, the one you can share your thoughts and ideas with, the one who understands you and is willing to make allowances for you, make sacrifices for you, and for whom you will be ready to make sacrifices. Freud, the great scientist who did so much to free the human mind on the subject of sex, says that love is sensuality plus tenderness; that is, it is the body functioning under command of mind and spirit or, as religious people might put it, it is God living in human form.

Sensuality is a terribly strong force in human life and can be a very evil one; it can, when let loose, cause the horrible things we read of in Poland and in Russia to-day, where some of the Nazis, governed by a creed which makes a god of physical violence, not only want to possess women sexually, but want to destroy them by torture, men and women both. It is, in this country, causing tragic things to happen. It is sensuality which makes a young wife whose husband is fighting in the Middle East, or shut up in a prison camp in Germany, lie in bed all day, living on the army allowance, and go out in the evening to give her body to some casually met soldier. And that, in a way, is just as cruel as the things crazy Nazis are doing to the conquered. If those Nazis had been taught respect for human beings, if they had been taught that the emotions of the body must be self-disciplined into tenderness, they could not commit what are called atrocities. If those young wives had been taught tenderness, they could not so cruelly hurt their helpless husbands.

I have discovered from my own observation that the only sort of love on which marriage can safely be based is a love that comes from friendship and *comradeship*, a love based on mental kinship and mutual respect, which finds its outlet in doing things together, dreaming together, working and playing together, and *finally* is expressed by physical intercourse. Before the war I lived in rather "modern" circles with a great number of young people about me. I saw quite a lot of "falling in love". I saw numbers of young people being violently attracted, rushing into marriage against the advice of their elders, and many of them have said to me, the day before they married, "Oh well, we can always get a divorce if it doesn't work." Sometimes these marriages lasted months or weeks and ended in separation and, if they were lucky, in divorce. Some of them dragged out in sordidness and hatred because divorce, for one reason or other, was impossible.

In other cases I have seen modern young people make the experiment of living together only to find, in the intimacy of four walls, that they were bored with each other, except in bed, after a week or so, and that even the physical thrills palled in a few months. Perhaps this was not so very serious; at any rate they could get out without a baby to complicate matters or the ponderous machinery of the divorce court set in work to free them. But it goes deeper than that. Intimate life had shown them as they were, and unfortunately many of them come out of this sort of affair with a considerable bitterness for the other person and a serious loss of self-respect. Of course, they hadn't really given marriage, as we staid older people mean it, a chance. They were rather greedy young people in that nasty unbalanced world before the war when nothing felt secure; they were grabbing at something and building nothing, because it seemed useless to build then with death hovering over us. Sometimes these young people were both fine people, but wrongly matched; they could not rouse each other's creative instinct nor each other's tenderness; all they could do was to arouse each other's sexual emotion, leaving mind and spirit hungry.

I saw one young man amongst our pre-war intelligentsia walk out on the girl because she was going to have a baby, and another because she was faced with a mastoid operation and had to be some months away from her self-supporting job. Queerly enough I never saw a girl walk out on a man in this circle because he had no job or was ill; they walked out for other men, but never for their own man's misfortunes, which seems to indicate that perhaps women have a little more of that essential tenderness than their males! But I am not sure of that when I think of war prisoners' wives breaking up the home, deserting the children, and going off with another man.

In war time the situation is infinitely more dangerous in its future implications. Emotions are at white heat—for instance, after such a thing as Dunkirk. "I've escaped from death—I may be dead next week. Let us have something," the boy says; so they marry. That is a better reason than many. In other cases, far, far too tragically often, the girl marries because she wants to escape from her conscription and get a baby at the earliest possible moment. I have known girls marry soldiers whom they have not known for a month; they get separation allowance and don't even have to cook an egg or sew on a button as their part of the marriage bargain. They often get married at their mother's instigation. "You'll get his money

and you don't have to put up with him. And if he goes you'll have his pension," say these harpies. (This is absolutely true, they even write it to me, an impartial observer.)

In our services there seems no control over the marriage of service men. Luckily the Canadians require some amount of enquiry and delay and the U.S. army has wisely made hurried marriage impossible; I don't know what the conditions of marriage amongst our refugee guest armies are, I only know that British girls are marrying foreigners in alarming numbers. (Recently I heard the banns of marriage between twenty-three Poles and British girls called in a Catholic church in a small town.) Usually after the marriage the husband goes back to his unit, and his wife goes back to her parents, or to lodgings. Quite often she tags round the country with her husband, living in lodgings while he is on duty. These young husbands and wives have very little hope of making a success of married life after the war; usually they married either in a state of emotional crisis and sex hunger, or for the more sordid reasons I have mentioned, getting money for nothing or escaping conscription. They have none of the mutual joy of making a home, the husband particularly knows nothing of the sacrifices demanded of married folk, sacrifices easily endured in the first thrill of married life but not so easily borne when that thrill has worn off. When you are passionately in love with a young husband it is not so difficult to give up having a perm because he needs a new shirt; when you adore a newly-married wife you pay the instalments on the furniture and radio willingly; but it won't be so easy to do without cigarettes and cinemas for these things when you have been married a few years and have lost the thrill which makes sacrifice a pleasure. Adjustments in personal habits have to be made while the glow of the honeymoon is still bright; that cannot be in war time, and I cannot see how these hurried marriages to unknown people can hope to succeed, even between boys and girls of the same race.

When the girls have married foreigners, or even Dominions or U.S. men, it will be even more difficult. They know practically nothing about each other's ways of life, of thought. It may sound very foolish, but try to imagine being married to someone who doesn't even eat the same food you are used to, who won't like the food you cook, who has entirely different habits from yours. Once I tried to share a flat with a girl friend; we were fond of each other and enjoyed each other's company till we came to live together. Then we nearly drove each other crazy; I was in an office all day and wanted either to read or

write in the evenings and at week-ends for a time. She was completely incapable of reading, sewing, knitting or any of the quiet occupations; she liked to play the piano, but only for a short time; I suppose she did stay in bed once she got there, but while she was awake I am sure she never stayed in one place for five minutes all the time I knew her; what she wanted was for me to talk, or rather listen to her talking, or else go with her to a cinema or theatre or have people in to play cards—and I can't play any card game! In the right environment that girl would have been happy and very welcome; with me she was quite wrong, but she insisted on being with me. Of course we parted after a few months of irritation, but supposing we had been husband and wife! We could not have parted simply like that. Quererly enough, that little episode taught me more about marriage than much theorizing ever did. Because there are thousands of married couples just as well-meaning and just as foredoomed to make a hash of living together.

Don't rush into marriage—find out all you can about each other first, before you shut yourselves up in the terrible intimacy of home life. Find out what you think about the important issues of life and of the moment. What you feel about politics and religion will show you how you are made; what you feel about current problems will illuminate you for someone who wants to find out what you are. To take a passing instance; when our government ordered the chaining of German prisoners because the Nazis had chained our men, I pointed out to an intimate friend that that implied, on our part, a very dangerous recognition of the principle of hostages—the punishment of people for something of which they were obviously innocent and even ignorant. She could not see it. If she had been a man I was thinking of marrying, I should have paused for considerable thought, because the inability to see that point, and the demand for unjust revenge, showed me such a cleavage in our ways of thinking that we could never have got on in intimate life. In the same way a girl who is what we vaguely call communistic or socialistic would be very foolish to marry a conservative sort of boy; she is of the adventurous, giving type, rather violent, perhaps not always reliable because she is always scrapping her ideas for new ones; he is calm, reliable, unadventurous and stodgy, with a keen sense of the value of the personal property she would give away with both hands. These are such great psychological differences that these two could never be happy in intimate life. A boy keen on scientific reading, who is completely without any religious sense, would be foolish to

marry a girl who loves poetry and who wants to go to church. St. Paul meant much more than he probably intended when he said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Unless you believe the same fundamental things you can't settle down happily in a home together; unless you have to some extent the same tastes you can only live in a state of armed neutrality, and constant bickering in time destroys even sexual interest in each other.

The average courtship does not tell you much about each other, though working together in the Services, in a factory or a shop or office may give you fairly clear sidelights on character. Games are an excellent indication of character; a girl who sulks when she loses a game of tennis will probably sulk if things don't go easily for her in the game of life. A boy who cheats at cards, ever so slightly, has either such an avaricious nature that he will be a very mean and niggardly husband, or else so much vanity that he would be unbearable to live with, since he could never accept defeat even in an argument. Hiking and camping together are good; if a girl can't stand a blistered heel and spoils the day by her complaints—if, indeed, she is the sort of idiot who would set out on a long walk with the sort of shoes and stockings that will produce a blistered heel, she is not likely to be much good as a wife until she has learnt by hard knocks. In love with her, you will melt into softness at her pain and won't administer those hard knocks till you are out of love—and then it will probably be too late. Do be cold-blooded in choosing your life partner; sex is very, very important, but it is only part of married life, and the sort of sex attraction that lasts, that is lit with the light of the spirit and the mind, is based on the tenderness that comes of *character*. Sex can be a dangerous dope and it can be something savage, unless it has such a civilized basis.

But supposing you have made your choice, found the person who thrills you, without whom you feel you can't bear to live? There are still many things to wreck your happiness. Boredom is one of the biggest of them. A boy and girl fall in love; perhaps they are both at work, in the Forces, in a factory or office, or possibly at the university. All the time they are apart they are longing to be together. Practically each evening and every week-end they meet; they may go to dances and cinemas several times a week if they can afford it; perhaps they sit at home, or in dark corners somewhere, experimenting in thrills. She is miserable if he plays football on Saturday afternoon, he if she goes out with a girl friend for the evening. If either goes out

for an evening with a member of the opposite sex there is despair or violent quarrelling.

The trouble about most courtships or engagements is that they become perilously like a concentration camp. Neither of the two, in this sort of possessive and glamorous engagement, gets a new idea into their heads from one month to another; they devour each other instead of seeking new food to give each other. Sometimes the passionate love-making and experimenting in thrills arouses them both so much that they become irritable, start quarrelling and bickering, not realising that the natural end of love-making is intercourse and that the nerves have been stretched to breaking-point by night after night of abortive love-making.

I cannot help feeling very anxious about the future of marriage in this country, even from the physical point of view, and according to sex psychology books I have read, it seems the same in U.S.A. I mean, American sex psychologists seem to indicate that half the women in their country are frigid—that is, they either actively detest or passively submit to the physical side of married life with no pleasure or interest at all. In this country I know nothing of the well-to-do class (except that they seem to get into the divorce courts a great deal) but I do know that in 1941, the only year of which I kept any statistics, over 7,000 married women wrote to me telling me they either detested and refused to have intercourse or put up with it with boredom, or longed to find in it something to enjoy. I mention this phenomenon of married life here, apparently out of context, because I believe that in some cases it comes from the “keeping on the edge” tactics of the courting couple; they make love because they haven’t anything to talk about and not enough money to go to cinemas every evening; if they are conventional or religious or high-minded, they manage to restrain themselves from actual copulation; if they are none of these things, the girl has vague ideas about “protecting something more precious than life”, as her mother has put it to her, while the boy, just as egotistical and probably more ardent, spends his time urging his desires upon her; wrangling about chastity results, until either they part in bitterness and the girl loses the boy to someone more accommodating; or else the girl, as she puts it, “gives way”, and what should have been a joyous coming together becomes an act of terrified submission on her part, an act of cruelty followed by remorse on his.

Moreover, the first union is often brought about in conditions enough to make any girl frigid and any boy impotent for life—

in some dark corner, in a car or taxi or, if they are better off, in all the nasty furtiveness of an hotel bedroom, hurried, frightened and fumbling. The blackout and the removal of park and garden railings have provided young lovers with many more chances of intercourse than they had before the war, but even then it is a bad beginning to sexual experience to make love with one ear cocked for the tramp of policeman or warden while the other, in many parts of the country, is always waiting for the wailing of the Alert. Is it any wonder that, so often, sexual intercourse becomes a horror to a girl and an act of selfishness unaccompanied by a vestige of tenderness to a man?

Nature meant young people to mate as birds do, when they fall in love and are full of the joy of life, but civilization won't allow it. Civilization says that young people must not make love until they have a home to do it in, until they have bed and board and are sure of being able to support the children that may result from their union. Physically, perhaps, a girl of seventeen and onwards may be fit for motherhood, but neither she nor the boy of her own age are fit for parenthood in the financial, spiritual, or social sense. Physically they are both fit for sexual experience, *but sexual experience never is completely physical*. A girl's virginity is still, in most but the very "advanced" circles, valued much more highly than her spiritual and mental chastity, and most men still have relics of that primitive idea which demands that a girl shall be physically intact, even if her mind is far from virginal. A young man who marries a girl who has had several lovers is probably much more likely to have a happy marriage than if he marries one who has tortured herself in order to "keep pure" or who has found an outlet in catty behaviour to other girls and boys, or in smutty conversation. But young men are still, on the whole, so primitive that they lose interest in and respect for a girl if she has "given way" to their demands, and girls still feel that they have "given him all" by allowing sexual intercourse.

Until sexual education and responsibility towards others is much more general, my experience shows me that practically no young people should have sexual intercourse before marriage. Girls write to me in their hundreds saying "I lost my head with a boy some years ago, then I found I didn't love him, so we parted. Now I love a boy who respects me so much that if he knew the truth he would never look at me again. If I marry him, will he know? Would it be fair for a girl with a past like mine to marry a decent boy?" If she were a widow she would not feel unfit to marry a decent boy; often she tells the boy

and he does leave her (and often, unfortunately, spreads round their circle why he did so, with tragic consequences for the girl). Often she does not tell him, and he discovers the truth when they get married; I have known young husbands desert their wives for this reason, and often have known them start the honeymoon passionately in love and come back a few days later to a life of sneering on the husband's part and heartbreak on the girl's. I am convinced that only the young people who have been brought up in homes where honest and clear thinking about sex have been the breath of their lives are fit for sexual freedom and can enjoy it happily.

But many of the others will practise it, happily or otherwise; this is especially true in war-time. How difficult it is for a girl whose boy has embarkation leave to refuse him at the last time they may ever meet; how difficult for a girl faced for the first time with the pathos, the broken English, the foreign charm of some of the refugee fighting men, or even more, perhaps, with the trans-Atlantic boy who talks just like the films! I worked amongst two thousand women and girls in the last war, when we were all just beginning to take the first terrified steps towards some sort of sexual enlightenment and freedom. There was enough scandal and gossip then about sexual behaviour; I am sure that the freedom of those days looks like the narrowest tyranny compared to the licence of to-day. This is a problem that has to be faced. I confess that I don't find it easy to find an argument that will help much, but here are a few arguments I often offer to boys and girls.

First, you may have a baby. If you do, you may rush into marriage out of fear and chivalry and it may turn out utter misery—it *will* turn out utter misery if you are only marrying to save yourselves from disgrace. The girl may be deserted by the boy, turned out of home by scandalized parents and be destitute; if she is, there are many Homes that will take her in, but the average girl won't enjoy herself in them! Many of them are run by religious people, who try to reform the young mother-to-be; in all, there is fairly strong discipline, and rightly so, since in the majority of cases the girl who has "got into trouble" is weak, unbalanced and irresponsible. (This is not true of all unmarried mothers, of course; but those who are strong and courageous usually manage to battle on alone, without asking help from anyone.)

If the girl gets an Affiliation order against the boy, he may have to pay until the child is sixteen—a heavy fine on his salary if he marries someone else; a wage of £3 a week to marry on

is not luxury, but if out of it a weekly sum of 7s. 6d. has to be paid to the court for some other girl's baby, both husband and wife are going to feel embittered in time.

As for the girl with an illegitimate child, her lot is a very hard one. Even the most charitable Home hesitates to take a child entirely off a girl's hands, as they think it may encourage her to have another; some Homes give financial help towards the child's support, but under strict supervision to which many modern girls object. If she wants to marry, the child is a handicap; not many men will not talk about their excessive goodness in marrying a girl with a baby, when a row arises. And, of course, the child suffers terribly. It has no real home, no father and mother united in loving and bringing it up; the production of its tell-tale birth certificate at school causes the child terrible agony; often it is pushed round from one relative to another, or even deserted.

Some people may think that a baby is the worst consequence of going "off the rails" before marriage. It is bad enough, certainly, but there are others as bad, if not worse. The baby, the tie it may create between two people who do not love each other, the financial burden of its upbringing and the disgrace it brings on its mother (if not its father) are concrete, actual facts to be reckoned with, but they are not all the trouble.

I must have known hundreds of young couples in my time, many of whom have tried sexual experiments before marriage, and very rarely have I known them marry afterwards. It wasn't that they found each other unsuitable; they never got a chance to find out if they were suitable or not, having to make love in such a hole-and-corner way. It was either that the girl began to hate the boy for making her do something so risky, or the boy despised the girl for not being "pure", since the male still has a great worship of chastity at the back of his mind, no matter how much he attacks it in his girl friends; there is no doubt that, no matter how much the boy desires, demands and enjoys sexual intercourse with his girl, he despises and blames her for allowing it as a rule. It is fairly safe to say that almost always it leads to a parting, and that, if they had waited for their mating until they had a home and a wedding ring, they might have stayed together for life.

This is not a book written to lay down the law to you. It is a book written by someone who has had rather an unusual opportunity, both by work and by temperament, of getting to know human beings. And my experience of life has, unfortunately, taught me that sometimes a thing that is right in

itself may become very wrong through the circumstances in which it is done. That is, I believe that it would not injure young people's bodies to have sexual experience before marriage unless they had a child while the girl was under eighteen or nineteen; I know of no religious reason why their souls should be hurt if their bodies came together; I know of no reason why their minds should be dulled or blunted—rather the opposite, since once they had done that mysterious thing which seems so important when forbidden and unknown, they might put it in its right place as part of life, as well-mated married people do.

But when I say these things, I am speaking of a condition of the world very much in advance of 1943; if I were a young unmarried girl instead of a middle-aged woman to-day, I honestly don't know, amongst my numerous friends, more than half a dozen women who would not be either horrified, disgusted or saddened if I told them I had been to bed with a boy; and I certainly do not know half a dozen men amongst whom I could choose a temporary lover without fear of being despised afterwards. We are still far too full of old ideas to risk anything like sexual freedom yet. It is one of those things like complete disarmament of nations; some nations, like Denmark, disarmed almost entirely, and they were overrun with hardly a protest by the enemy; others, like ourselves, partially disarmed, and have had to scratch together a fighting force and munitions, by gigantic sacrifice, overwork and scrounging, in the teeth of the enemy. Total disarmament is a thing against which no civilized person could say a word—if we lived in a civilized world. Sexual freedom is a thing against which no honest psychologist or moralist could say a convincing word—if we lived in an educated and civilized community. But as we don't, we have to put up with the consequences, and those who have enough reverence for human personality and social consequences to use this very important part of themselves before marriage have to make sacrifices for and suffer with those who have not yet enough sense of responsibility or enough knowledge.

But what can we do? you may ask. In fact, to-day I have written or dictated over fifty letters to boys and girls, trying to answer that very question. "How can I stop him from going too far?" "How can I keep him fond of me if I won't go too far?" is the girl's plea. "Can you tell me any sincere and honest reason why my girl and I should not go away for a week-end together? If you can, for God's sake tell me how we are to keep from boring each other sick?"

Some years ago I read in a book of advice to boys, written by a schoolmaster, that when they felt a sexual urge they should go for a brisk walk, taking a magnifying glass with them and examine wild life in the hedgerows. All I can say to that is that his experience of boys and young men differs very much from mine. But what he was getting at was sublimation, that is, diverting a strong force into a different channel. Sexual emotion is based on a desire to create, that is its first and most important function; the union that goes before the creating is, in Nature's eyes, of secondary importance, though it is of first importance to most people in love. But if you can't create a new life, and if, for the reasons I have given, you wisely don't want to risk the consequences of union, you will have to get busy on this job of sublimation—that is, of creating something.

Modern life is all against creativeness, or was until the war. Factory work has largely destroyed any pride or interest in work—you never see the finished article, you can't feel, with a glow, "I made that". You can't feel much excitement in serving slabs of margarine or yards of linen in a shop, and the vast ramifications of commerce have drawn thousands of girls and boys into office jobs where they have not a vestige of chance of expressing themselves; they are not efficient workers if they try to! The young stenographer who, when I was dictating letters to her, burst in frequently and said "I wouldn't say that, Comrade," was a very bad secretary, and however much I respected her human right to her opinion, I couldn't employ her; my job demanded that I had a secretary who was just an automaton to take down my thoughts. Only artists, domestic workers (if they have intelligent employers, or are working for themselves), cooks, land workers and, to some extent teachers, have any chance at all of creative work, so their only chance of sublimation is in their leisure hours.

I daresay it sounds middle-aged and silly to tell a boy or girl in the throes of passion to get busy, but honestly it *does* work; in fact, if you have always been busy in your leisure hours on something that interests you, and above all, something you can share with the one you love, you won't find the sex urge bother you nearly so much. For one thing, by occupying your leisure in creative activities, you acquire some quite useful self-discipline; you can't be a good swimmer, or tennis player, or even a good hiker, unless you can discipline your body quite a bit. Before the war young people, doing non-creative work all day, often had nothing to do in the evenings but sit inert in a cinema—and having been to so many cinemas, they were not

terribly interested in the film they saw. It was better to go dancing together, except that too many dance halls were so stuffy and the bands so poor that they got headachy and slightly drunk with bad air before bedtime.

But the boys and girls who go to a Workers' Educational Class, or an evening school, belong to a choir or orchestra, form an amateur dramatic society or join a political or religious organization don't, as a rule, find sex so troublesome; nor do they bore each other. And reading is tremendously important. It opens your mind to wider worlds, it takes you out of yourself, it stocks your mind with subjects of conversation—and far too often young people half-heartedly go in for sexual experiment because they have nothing to say to each other.

Then there is that very dangerous business of outside stimulation of sexual emotion. As I see it, sexual emotion can be aroused in three ways, two of them happy and healthy, one of them very much the reverse. It can come from the sheer overflowing of health and vitality; on a fine spring day a boy or girl can feel so well and happy that they want to unite with the whole earth and sky and sea and everybody in them; Life in them is trying to find some recipient for its bounding generosity, some partner for its glorious dance. It can be aroused by the nearness of someone you love or admire; you see the boy you love playing a game, and the grace of his movements, the beauty of his body, make you feel that there is nothing for it but a passionate embrace; or you see someone you love in a position that arouses your tenderness and sympathy, and the need to link yourself with them becomes a passion. These things seem to me the only civilized reason for sexual intercourse; the other, uncivilized thing is the excitement aroused by books, pictures, films and conversation.

Some films and theatre plays arouse sexual feelings in a vague, sloppy way, and so do some books, especially some that have begun to flood the country since the war; dirty talk, smutty tales have the same effect, because these arouse the sensation of shame and embarrassment which are still, in some minds, associated with sex. They give a feeling of sexual excitement which bears just the same relationship to real sexual feeling as the energy produced by alcohol or drugs gives to a tired worker; that is, they spur you on for the moment but leave you tired and exhausted afterwards, because the impulse did not come from *inside*. People who go in a good deal for these artificial stimulants become, in time, incapable of normal feelings and are usually very wretched, neurotic people.

One of the problems of courtship is those lovers' quarrels which so often crop up. For years this country has been devastated by that idea expressed by Tennyson in his poem about the blessedness of kissing again with tears after a quarrel; don't believe any of it. Quarrels never did any more good than wars did—in fact they are miniature wars, and can, in the delicate world of human relationship, destroy just as wars do. If you cannot give and take enough to get along amicably, you are not suited to each other; if you are not sufficiently controlled and good-mannered to discuss differing points of view without getting rattled, you have not enough self-control for any intimate relationship, and should go and sit down in a corner alone until you are—or rather, get out into the world and get some hard knocks. If you are really friendly, and have been for a long time, and suddenly begin to squabble about trifles, either part for a month and find out what it is to miss each other, or else try to fix your marriage for an early date. These quarrels that crop up between friendly lovers are almost always caused by sexual hunger which cannot get any appeasement, and if you cannot possibly hurry on your marriage, parting for a time will give you the opportunity to cool down and to find your self-control again.

Try not to have a long engagement; make your courtship an intensive one. Get to know each other in every possible way, to find out if you are really suited to intimate and narrow life together, then, if you feel sure, get married as soon as possible. If you are forced to have a long engagement, don't be so intense about it, but make the best of a bad job by doing things together as I suggested before. I think a year is long enough for any engagement, because sexual emotion cannot survive too many delays and disappointments without losing its glow and fineness. It is not a thing that will "stay put"; if it stays put too long it will coarsen into a mere indulgence in personal outlet or even disappear entirely. Friendship and comradeship may develop during a long engagement, but there is a terrible danger of everything becoming too jog-trot and dull unless you can mate when the impulse is there.

One of the questions put to me every day which almost defeats answer is, "How far shall I let my lover go before marriage?"

First, I think, a girl must realize that a boy is much more easily aroused, in this country at least, than she is; he is usually the one to make the demand because, in the very fundamental things of life, the male is the active person, the female the passive one; he *starts* the process of Life, she completes it. Unless a girl

understands this she may find herself in some awkward situations, and also cause a great deal of suffering to a boy; in fact, an innocent and ignorant girl may make things even more difficult for a boy than a little vamp who leads him on because she enjoys feeling her power over him.

Sexual excitement can be aroused by touch, by sight, by the voice and even by the smell of the loved person. A boy looks at the girl he loves and longs to possess her; he hears her voice and it thrills him; he smells her peculiar scent, and the idea of it causes a message to be telegraphed from the brain to the sexual organs, and indeed all over the body, in a sort of warm flush. He touches her, feeling the texture of her skin under his caress; he kisses her, and his lips, almost as sensitive to emotion as the sexual organs, also telegraph their message, until it is an actual pain to him to have to dam back such a flood of emotion. A boy trained to self-discipline can do it—but many boys are not so trained, and I must leave it to psychologists to determine what wear and tear of the nerves is caused by his conflict as he tries to “do the right thing” according to his code. Many boys cannot restrain themselves at all, and many girls are unable to help them to do so when matters have reached this pass.

I know that it is very hard to put up barriers between lovers, and a generous girl's spirit revolts from doing so. In love there should be no pleadings, no refusals, but a mutual coming together, and any talk of “thus far and no farther” must destroy the spontaneity between two people. But the girl who allows a boy to go so far and then turns him down is responsible for much suffering and bitterness, and unless she is prepared to go to ultimate lengths, she should not encourage passionate love-making. The girl who does it either “for fun” or in the spirit of experiment, deserves what she gets, which is either desertion by her boy or an illegitimate and unwanted baby. That is why I urged young lovers earlier in this chapter to work and play together on a comradesly footing and to leave passion alone as much as possible until it can take its natural course.

Now just a word about special problems of conduct created by the war. Many girls are living away from home, meeting boys of all classes and nations; they have not the protection of home and of a social circle, they have few mutual interests and always hanging over them is the thought that to-morrow may be too late. So it may, but it is not much help to a boy who is sent overseas to go with the fear that that moment of emotion during his embarkation leave may have left his girl with a baby

to cope with; if he gets news from her that she is pregnant, he cannot come back to marry her; he may be killed and she be left with a child unprovided for; an army Chaplain told me recently that several boys had told him that their fighting *morale* had been entirely destroyed by worry about their girl left at home in such a condition. Some girls have told me that they could not resist Poles or Fighting French soldiers "because I was so sorry for him"; but it is wise to remember that most men from the Continent know little of our social customs; they are accustomed to having easy and cheap access to the paid prostitute, and the excessive generosity of the British girl gives them very wrong impressions of her. The bitter humiliation of many of the girls now pregnant by foreign soldiers comes entirely from ignorance on both their sides; the soldier has no idea that "nice" girls, girls like their own sisters, in this country may, in a moment of admiration or pity, do what the continental male associates with prostitution; and probably the British girl hardly knows what such a word means. Foreign soldiers have told me that they are shocked by our girls and their sexual freedom; Dominions soldiers have told me the same thing. With male illogicality they make demands and are horrified when these demands are granted. I wish girls would realize that.

And the question of marrying foreigners is very important. I know a lot about this problem because my daughter married a foreigner long before the war, and I know what great difficulties of adjustment both of them had, she especially as she had to live in a foreign land. Both she and her husband were widely travelled and extremely international in their outlook; if they had such difficulties, how much greater is the difficulty of the British girl who has probably read very little of the literature of her foreign husband's country, and is typically British in her insular outlook. Theoretically, I am all for the mixing of nations, both by marriage and friendship, but I do beg girls to realize that, in the English-speaking countries, the status of women is incredibly different from that on the continent of Europe except perhaps, in Holland and Norway; we are generations ahead of the main body of European thought in our attitude towards women.

Lastly, girls have told me rather disquieting things that their foreign lovers have demanded of them, things one only knows about in this country from reading medical books. These demands come from ignorance on both sides,—the man's idea that this very free and oncoming young woman with her job, her

economic independence, is a sort of prostitute or she would not allow the liberties his sister would be appalled by; and ignorance on the girl's part of foreign conditions. All I can say is, that if a foreigner suggests to you anything that shocks or repels you, you should not do it. If you are really in love with a foreign soldier and feel that you want to make your life with him, if you are not just englamoured by his charming manners, his broken accent and strangeness, do go to your Free Library and get all the books you can about his country, its ideas, customs, political life and religious customs; if you don't, you are going to put yourself and him into a situation of appalling difficulty.

CHAPTER TWO

MASTURBATION

A PSYCHO-ANALYST ONCE said to me that ninety-nine per cent of people would admit to having at some time or other been addicted to masturbation and the other one per cent would lie about it. But I find that my own experience and observation does not coincide with this. Discussing the subject once with some young people, I found that two out of the seven had, like myself, first heard of it by reading books about sex. Masturbation is most usually the habit of solitary children and young people, and older people living celibate lives. Psychologists tell us that there are two types of people into which the human family may roughly be divided, the introverted and the extroverted people; introverted people are those who have an undue and rather morbid obsession with their own personal lives, who are not much interested in other human beings, and who look upon all human beings or happenings in relation to themselves; extroverted people are sociable, "matey" people, who can get wrapped up in other people's affairs and interests and are capable of friendship with others, even if the friendship is fairly impersonal and not intimate. In other words, there are givers and takers, and the people who as a general rule are troubled by masturbation are the takers.

A great deal of very bad advice has been given in the past to young people about masturbation. I have known clergymen refer to it as "impurity" in their confirmation classes; I have known schoolmasters talk to little boys of nine or ten about

"dirtiness", meaning masturbation, although quite often the poor little fellows have thought they meant bed-wetting and such accidents that afflict small boys, and have been bewildered and terribly upset by these veiled remarks. I have read in the correspondence columns of boys' papers veiled and terrifying threats against the habit, and have even known priests refuse absolution to unmarried men who did it.

Modern psychology has removed a great deal of the torture that used to surround this subject, but even yet many young people suffer agonies of shame and remorse from it, as my correspondence shows. I find, too, that even when a sane and qualified person tries to relieve a child of his guilt on this subject, he is not always believed. A mother thoroughly well qualified by her position to be believed told her small son the scientific reason for it when he went away to boarding school. After a term he came home in a neurotic state. Before he went to school he and she had been very great friends, but now all the friendship was killed and the boy was suspicious of her and very critical and condemnatory of all her actions. She found out later that the child had seen a boy publicly flogged and expelled for being caught in the act, and that all the boys in the school had called him a dirty beast; his reasoning was: All these chaps think it is dreadful, Mum says it isn't; Mum must be a dreadfully wicked person or else mad. It took some years to restore friendship between this mother and son, and it was only done after he came in contact with mass suggestion in a modern "free" school, where masturbation is put in its proper place.

Many children learn masturbation in babyhood. Mothers don't like wet laps or wet cots, so they fix an immense "wodge" of napkin very tightly between their babies' legs; baby soon finds that his kicking movements cause a rubbing against this "wodge" and produce a pleasant sensation; as children begin to reason, they find out that the pleasant sensation can be produced by handling the sensitive part, or even by wriggling on a school bench. Later they are told by schoolmasters, fathers and clergymen that they are doing something unforgivable. Is it any wonder that sexual enjoyment is killed in its very infancy?

Don't put your babies in thick napkins; butter muslin is the best napkin because it is thin and absorbent, and I discovered a way of folding a butter muslin napkin in such a way, with a pad of Turkish towelling resting beneath the baby's buttocks, that only a very thin strand of the butter muslin was drawn between his legs, and that very loosely. On the Continent, mothers use loosely packed bags of sphagnum moss or bran as

pads under the baby's buttocks, but this is rather expensive, and the pad of towelling, which can be washed, is simpler. Personally, I would rather have a wet lap—a wet cot can be prevented by a rubber sheet—than think I was starting a child in a habit which might cause him unhappiness later on. For the same reason mothers should be careful not to give tight knickers to their little girls and not to let their little boys brace their shorts too high. Even if masturbation is not a moral wrong, it is a pity to encourage the habit.

Masturbation can be dangerous for two reasons: it can cause terrible mental conflict when a child hears on all hands that it is "wrong"; it can confirm a young person in habits of solitariness and self-indulgence. Quite likely much of the remorse felt about it comes from that uneasy feeling that one is restricting to oneself something that should be shared, and no amount of scientific explanation and reasoning can dispose of the idea. Also, a long habit of masturbation can make a boy or girl unfit for marriage, because they have for so long associated sexual pleasure with certain acts and circumstances that they find it difficult to switch over to other acts and circumstances on marriage. This is especially the case with girls; in normal sexual connection a woman should feel pleasure when her lover penetrates the sexual opening; in masturbation most girls stimulate the clitoris, and by degrees form the idea that this is the only sexually sensitive part of their body. When they marry they are disappointed at finding no sensation at all in normal connection. Young men, on the other hand, usually accompany the act of masturbation by day-dreams and phantasies which they have to indulge in even after marriage, and this prevents the sex act from becoming something *personal* to the girl they have married, and kills that close and intrinsic union that should be the happiest outcome of marriage.

Masturbation is not a thing to encourage, simply because it tends to a self-indulgent and non-social habit of mind, because it may spoil marriage and may quite easily cause conflict. Many young men and women have written to me from time to time, telling me that it makes them physically exhausted, and from this sense of exhaustion has grown up the idea that it is "weakening". It is weakening because the effort needed, whether it is the effort of mental phantasy or physical manipulation, has all to be done by the one person, while in intercourse the stimulus comes from outside; everyone knows how impossible it is for even a ticklish person to tickle himself, and tickling is, after all, only a response to stimulation. Even people who have

no mental conflict about the immorality of masturbation, find it exhausting for this reason, but people who also have the feeling of guilt added to this difficulty may become really ill and run down through it. The idea that it is a necessary outlet is, science tells us, quite wrong. When such an outlet is needed, the body provides it during sleep without any stimulus at all.

Young people who have grown up in an atmosphere of prohibition and talk about "purity" find it very difficult to get sane about masturbation; perhaps this point of view will help them. Your body is your own; nobody owns it, nobody has any rights to dictate to you how you shall use it. It is no business of God or man what you do with it. Yet it is not your own in a very deep and special sense, in that each of us belongs to the community of the world and will be a nuisance to other members of that community if we don't learn how to make our bodies healthy, beautiful, and in perfect working order. A neurotic person, no matter how sorry we are for him, is a nuisance, because his troubles slop over on to those about him, his moods depress them; a shaky, timid, pimply young man with a guilt-complex is horrid to look at or talk to; a young man who cannot, when he marries, make love to his wife properly, or a young woman who cannot respond to her lover's embraces, are anti-social and dreadful nuisances in the world. To this extent your body is not your own, and for the sake of the community it is up to you to manage it properly. And for your own sake you will be a fool if you let yourself do messy, untidy things with it, and so wear off the fine edge of sensation. If you can remain virgin until you find your right mate you are a lucky person because then you will experience what love can mean, in mind, body and spirit. But it must be a *voluntary* virginity, a virginity imposed by your own conviction that you are waiting for something worth waiting for; it must not be a virginity imposed by fears, by religion, by convention, or any outside interference. If you can avoid masturbation by *self-discipline* and by a busy, strenuous life, do so. But don't call outside discipline to your aid or you will grow up cringing or dependent.

Those lonely people who have fallen into the habit of masturbation and who want to cure it can do so; this especially applies to wives parted by war conditions from their husbands and who, for perhaps the first time in their lives, have taken to the habit. You should avoid, above everything, idleness. Get so busy that you go to bed tired; in my correspondence since the war I have never noticed a letter from a service woman or a munitions

worker on this subject; they have all been either from aliens unable to find work or intimate friendship, lonely unmarried people, men in ill health or wives who have no job to do. Work is their first goal on the way to a cure from a habit that distresses them; it will not only make their bodies tired but will divert their emotions to a social aim, and masturbation will become distasteful.

A simple bromide at bedtime is quite good; in these days of drug scarcity it is not possible to say whether or not one can get such a thing without a doctor's prescription, only a chemist can tell that. But even a hot drink like Ovaltine and an aspirin tablet will help very much. Reading in bed is a good thing too—not a sleepy, dull book, but something that will grip the attention. I have found it useful to try to educate people in habits of self-discipline by suggesting their yielding to the habit on two definite nights of the week for a month, then on one night and so on, until gradually they cut the ration down to nothing. By degrees this strikes them as being so silly that most of them get tired of it. This advice is also useful to those parted from their husbands by the war, who cannot sleep because they miss love-making so much.

Finally, I have found it effective to advise those women who believe in religion (and there are many more of these since the war than before it) to go to bed and say their prayers; by that I do not mean besiege some tribal deity with prayers for the safety of the person you love, but try to project your thoughts to him, and I don't think it is fantastic to say that, in the mysterious region of thought, you and he may find each other with your love and be refreshed and comforted

CHAPTER THREE

GETTING MARRIED

SAVAGES VERY RARELY have sex troubles; they seem to enjoy their sex lives in a way that makes civilized people green with envy; they seem to live in happiness with their mates and rarely think of separating. If you look into the lives of uncivilized people you find something very interesting, something we could well copy in our vaunted civilized lives. Firstly, husband and wife are both very busy; you don't find a savage woman so

bored that she has to take another lover, to watch other people singing or dancing, to find other women to join her in knocking balls about or playing with bits of paper on which are painted strange signs. She has quite enough to do with her one lover; if she likes singing and dancing she sings and dances about her work or joins in communal singing and dancing; she has her job to do and does it while the man does his. She starts married life sanely, even though quite frequently she has not been allowed to choose her mate, who has been chosen for her by her parents; but she *has never heard nasty talk about sex*, has never imagined it could be anything but normal and natural; she has never been told that certain parts of her body are dirty or nasty; she has never heard a smutty joke. What is more, before she marries, the other women put her through a rehearsal of the sex act and prepare her body for it so that she suffers no pain of mind or body. She starts right and usually goes on happily.

The civilized young person approaches marriage with absolutely everything against him; he has been taught by convention, and even by law, to cover up his body; even when he swims in the sea or the baths certain parts of his body have been singled out as so appalling that they must be covered up. As a baby he has been taught by his mother or nurse that the functions of his body which are connected with those organs he will afterwards have to associate with Love are dirty and disgusting; he has listened to whispered stories about sex, making it seem either something to snigger at and therefore undignified, something cruel and therefore to be avoided or indulged in according to his temperament, or something nasty which can't be helped. The idea that the body is an instrument of the spirit, that the spirit can use it as its means of expression, has never entered his head; religion has taught him that the body is an enemy to be subdued. It is strange how young people, brought up in a Christian atmosphere, should so blankly have misunderstood the deep implication of the Eucharist, in which the commonest things of everyday life—food and drink—are given a divine significance by being used as an instrument of spiritual expression, and it is just as strange that those young folks who can read and enjoy love-poetry, and tales of chivalry in which a desire to unite with the beloved is the motive force, should still look upon sexual connection as something ugly or degrading. But they do.

Then, apart from the puritanical idea that anything connected with the body is a "lower" appetite and to be subdued, and

the sordid idea which has made the organs of sex either "dirty" or "wicked", most young people are completely ignorant of the technique of connection and of sexual desire in general. I get dozens of letters from girls telling me the wedding-dress and the presents have arrived and that they feel like running away out of terror of what is going to be done to them; I get even more letters from girls who are pregnant because they did not know that sexual connection could produce a baby; and still more from women who had such a fright and such pain on the marriage night that they have never, in ten or twenty years of marriage, looked upon intercourse as anything but terrifying and repulsive. A savage woman not only tells her daughter exactly how intercourse is performed by the man, but how it should be performed by the woman to make it pleasant; she even lessens the rigours of the marriage night for both girl and boy by either breaking the hymen for her daughter or showing her how to break it herself—a much more civilized state of affairs than that in this country, where so many young married people fail again and again to have connection because it is difficult and painful at first.

Physically, young people should be prepared for marriage. Sexual enjoyment is impossible when one is overtired and unhealthy. Very often the few weeks before marriage are a time of strain; too many parties and late nights, with unwholesome food; too much excitement and overwork; too much mental conflict in many cases. Sexual intercourse is the highest expression of bodily perfection and you should get your body into a healthy state for it, just as you would if you were going to play cricket or hockey for your county, or going to give an exhibition of dancing in public. Being fit for marriage is more important to you than any game or dance can be; your later attitude to physical love may be determined by the success or failure you make of the first few months.

Then try to live naturally and quietly, take outdoor exercise and baths, to make your skin smooth and vital, because much of the pleasure of intercourse begins when bodies touch each other and the delicate nerves are stimulated in this way. Avoid constipation as you would the plague; if you are constipated your blood is being poisoned, and poisoned blood means a weakly, debilitated body, which is unfit for the fine raptures of love. In women especially constipation is a serious bar to sexual enjoyment, because chronic constipation may cause pain in intercourse as well as debility.

Lastly, there is the difficult problem of the hymen, which is

an elastic ring of skin at the opening to the vagina. In primitive countries it is gradually stretched by the fingers of the mother or the girl herself; in highly civilized circles to-day, a girl will go to a doctor and have it done, and I strongly advise any girl about to be married to go to a woman doctor for this purpose; if it is broken suddenly and in a moment of impassioned haste by the husband, pain and shock are caused to the wife, and bleeding which is by no means aesthetic or pleasant; it is also extremely painful for the man in many cases. Numbers of men have confessed to me that it is by no means a pleasant thing to have connection with a virgin; indeed, the only men to whom it is pleasant are those with such a streak of cruelty in their make-up that they enjoy inflicting pain. I know that there is the problem of a girl's chastity to consider here, for it is very common in this country for a man to doubt his wife's chastity if the first connection is too easy, but education in sex will remove this piece of savagery from men's minds in time, and they will be anxious for their prospective wives to have this very necessary attention from a doctor so that no pain shall mar their first coming together. It can be done by inserting the finger and thumb, well vaselined, and expanding the elastic ring gently and gradually while in a warm bath, but many girls would be terrified to do such a thing. If a girl marries with the hymen intact, the only thing that *must not* happen is for her husband to have connection with her without any preparation. Many a marriage has been wrecked on the marriage night by the girl's unpreparedness and the man's eagerness, and by that convention which demands that the first night shall be an orgy. When one or both of a married couple are ignorant of sex and have been brought up in an atmosphere of prohibition, it is much wiser to go home together after the wedding and get used to each other's bodies by sleeping together for a few nights. This is not easy on the man, I know, but it is worth some amount of self-sacrifice to avoid giving the wife a shock from which she may never recover, and which may make her a frigid and repellent partner for life. It is wiser, too, before attempting connection, for the husband to stretch the hymen for his wife, if she has been too timid to do it herself or have a doctor do so. To do it gently, with the help of vaseline saves much distress of mind and body, and as the fingers are so much more intelligent than the penis they are not likely to hurt. It is wise, too, for a man to explore his wife's body as much as possible before connection; the boy who has had contact with prostitutes, or who has had those two-minute

affairs in the dark by which our unhappy boys to-day get their initiation into sex, knows nothing of a woman's body, and often carries the two-minute technique into married life, to his own ultimate disappointment and his wife's nervous ruination. If he will realise that sexual connection is a leisured thing and that the preliminaries are even preferable to the climax, he will soon find that patience is well rewarded.

So much for the physical preparations for marriage. The mental ones are quite as important. Many wise people to-day advise strongly against the honeymoon, and I am very much in agreement with them as a general thing. In some cases, of course, where the young couple have discussed sex frankly and grown used to the idea of it, the honeymoon may be an occasion of real refreshment and happiness, but most often it is an occasion of embarrassment and boredom. The young husband feels that sexual ardour is expected of him, and if he is ignorant or if his mind has been hurt by cheap sex affairs, he dreads his marriage night, even while he looks forward to it with excitement. The surroundings are strange, often uncomfortable and awkward, and the pitiful fact that few young people know how to use leisure now-a-days means that, removed from friends and relations and the normal routine, they fall back on sexual excitement to relieve the boredom. The whole point is, I think, that there is always too much sex on a honeymoon and one of the partners usually becomes a little satiated, while the other far too often becomes submissive. And above all, sex is removed from its right position as a normal part of "each day's most quiet need" and becomes something unusual, something outside the normal run of things. Sexual desire is such a delicate thing that it cannot be turned on like a tap; young people cannot say, "On the 30th of June we shall want each other so much that we will get married in the morning and have intercourse at night." How can they tell that they will want to?

This is my idea of an ideal marriage: choose your home, even if it is only one room; have your things dumped in it by a removal man; go off next morning and get married, either at a registrar's office or a church, whichever you prefer, then go about your daily work; it is better to have a holiday of a few days from your business if possible, so that you can be alone together, busy with your nest-building and with discovering the fun of keeping house together. Have your intimate friends to the ceremony to wish you well if you like, but don't have a party; too much is eaten and drunk at parties—young folks

unused to alcohol get head-achey and excited, and the rich food and the nervous stress of speech-making and emotional scenes with mothers and aunts will cause nervous indigestion. Marriage is a matter between two people and it is barbarous to make it a social occasion—even more barbarous to make it an occasion for emotionalism. If two young people get together in their own home, get absorbed in its arrangement and in the thrill of having their own place at last, night approaches naturally and there is none of the usual terror on the girl's part, panic on the boy's. If it is natural for them to have intercourse that night, let them have it by all means. If either does not want it, let them wait. A psycho-analyst told me that he had, in his own practice, about a dozen cases where a man was made impotent by the fact that he failed to have intercourse on the first night owing to his wife's unpreparedness and his own nervousness, caused partly by the ordeal of the wedding and the reception, over-eating and over-drinking.

The honeymoon can come later, in the form of their first holiday together, when sex has become a normal thing in their lives, as normal and natural as work and food. That is the thing I so much want to emphasise—that sexual connection should be prepared for by knowledge and any physical adjustment necessary, but that it should come almost by chance the first time. It is an immensely important part of marriage, but to make it disproportionately important at first, and to let it bulk larger than comradeship and the thousand and one other interests of living together, usually means its ruination.

In my correspondence, I have noticed hundreds of cases where a young wife has had normal pleasure and interest in intercourse until pregnancy; after that, either it becomes so repellent to her that she tries to avoid it, or she endures it without a vestige of enjoyment.

Now quite apart from any physical injury or jarring of the nerves, quite apart from the fact that often, through overwork or bad conditions or a sick baby, the mother is very run down after childbirth, she may be so frightened at the thought of a repetition of it that her whole emotional life is one large fear. I remember, after the birth of my first child in very difficult circumstances, I was so haunted by terror that I found myself wondering, as I went along the street and met pregnant women how they could smile and appear happy, and when my second baby started on his way very shortly after the first one, I was almost suicidal with terror. I know all girls are not so silly or

so imaginative as I was, but many are so frightened that the thought of the act that produces a baby can make them incapable of anything but grim endurance of intercourse. This terror may not even be conscious; some women have told me they love their husbands passionately, are not afraid of having another baby, but dislike intercourse almost to the point of hysteria.

This dislike is largely caused by unconscious control. The mind consists, roughly, of two "compartments", the conscious mind which contains all those moral and unselfish and social ideas by which we try to rule our lives; and the unconscious mind which controls most of the bodily functions and which is entirely unsocial and selfish; into it we push nasty, ugly and painful ideas and memories; into it goes the memory of that awful sickness of pregnancy, that weariness and heaviness of the last few weeks, that tearing pain of the actual few moments of birth—things we forget with astonishing rapidity after a baby is born. These ugly memories are seized on by the selfish unconscious which resents that one should be made to suffer and which can paralyse the body from enjoying the act which may be a prelude to a further pregnancy.

It is not easy to cure oneself of this paralysed feeling; psycho-analysis can do it, but it is a slow method and almost inaccessible to a busy woman, but self-analysis is very helpful. Take the thought of the pain and discomfort out of that cupboard of the mind, look at it, accept it, tell someone about it if you know anyone wise enough to understand. If you don't, try writing it all down in every tiny, horrible detail and then burn it—and this treatment applies, by the way, to any terrifying experience such as bombing, being buried and so on. (This explains why a number of women novelists have described childbirth in such very gruesome detail; they had to get rid of it.) Then go to a clinic or doctor and get the best birth control advice you can and use it for a time, until you feel normal once more.

I have been very much surprised, during the past eighteen years, to hear in conversation with psycho-analysts, and to read in my correspondence, how very many people are, for one reason or other, living a married life without sex. Many people between twenty-five and thirty-five have written to say, "We have been trying to live as brother and sister for the past two or three years, since the birth of our last baby, and lately I have felt terribly tired. My husband sleeps very badly, and we both find that quarrels arise simply out of nothing. We

are drifting apart. Do you think sex can be at the bottom of it? And if so, why did we both live peaceably without it before we were married?"

Sex is certainly at the bottom of it. When one realizes that intimate life and close contact between two people who love each other set in train the very complicated set of nervous actions and reactions I have described, it is obvious that the constant damming back of such actions before their climax must seriously affect the nerves. Before marriage people have not this intimate everyday contact; they are busy with many other emotional outlets, and, above all, they have something to look forward to. People living a celibate life when married, whether it is for the purposes of birth control or because one or other of the partners has ceased to want the other, or because the husband is impotent, must be very unusually balanced if they can live without quarrels, and even the balanced ones, whose life to outsiders seems harmonious and happy, suffer badly from lack of energy and a general feeling of hopelessness and dullness.

One of the surprises that the war has brought to me in the form of peoples' problems, is the increase in the cases of impotence, by-which I mean inability on the part of the man to have intercourse, even though he loves his wife and has no desire for any other woman. Before the war I did not have more than one letter a week on this subject; ever since the first weeks of 1940 I have been getting a steady increase of these cases, and several doctors to whom I have mentioned it, have told me that they have noticed the same thing.

Impotence, in peace time, may be of several kinds; it may be caused by too much indulgence in sexual intercourse which, in course of time, destroys a man's ability to respond to any sex stimulus—hence the drugs one sees advertised in certain magazines and in some shop windows. It may be caused by overwork, either physical or intellectual, by debility after illness, or by anxiety. This type of impotence is not serious; rest, building up the health, removal of the causes of worry, will, after a time, restore a man to his normal way of life, but while he is in the state of physical overstrain, his wife would be most unwise, not to say cruel, to let him see that she is suffering; if she does so, her husband will become self-conscious, lose his confidence, even perhaps make frantic efforts to be normal and often fail, with the result that he becomes permanently impotent.

Anything so delicate as sexual emotion should never be flogged to activity, but if the condition goes on for many months a

doctor should be consulted; often some of the new gland injections or a course of Vitamin tablets will help; but anything the doctor can do must be backed up by unending patience and tact, self-control and tenderness from the wife. I think that some of the cases of war-impotence come from strain of overwork, firewatching and anxiety about raids or about the future; and the very great change in the national dietary, from excessive meat-eating to practical vegetarianism, excellent though it may be in the long run, may affect the sexual potency of men. Perhaps, too, there is some unconscious resistance to carrying on the race in worlds of such insecurity and danger, but that is too deep a subject to discuss in such short space as this.

By far the commonest cause of impotence, both in normal times and during war, is psychological; that is to say, the man is perfectly capable, physically, but cannot set the apparatus in motion; he is like a man sitting at the steering wheel of a powerful car with no idea how to start the engine—or rather, he knows how the engine should be started but cannot stretch out his hand to do it.

Usually wrong teaching, or even chance remarks in childhood will bring about this unhappy state of affairs. A little boy may be smacked for wetting the bed or the floor, and he gets the idea that all activities of his penis are punishable; a man who stayed in our house for a year or so because he wanted me to help him through some sex difficulties, was not only impotent but always found the greatest difficulty in passing water, but when, on a few occasions, he drank more than usual, he discovered that both functions of the penis operated perfectly well; after a lot of psycho-analysis he discovered that his terror came from having been severely punished for bed wetting as a tiny boy, and then he was cured.

Sometimes a little boy is punished for what old-fashioned people used to call "playing with himself", by which they meant fingering the penis; yet how often is a little boy told by a harassed mother, "Oh, Jackie, for goodness' sake don't bother me. Go and play by yourself in the garden!" How can he know the difference, and how understand if caught doing what he thinks he was told to do?

To those who have the care of a young baby, I would urge great care not to frighten him about bodily functions; train him in regularity even from the seventh month, when he can be held over a chamber without injuring his back; after a meal is the best time, as well as immediately he wakes up; if

there are accidents, ignore them; far better a little "dirtiness" than inhibitions about his organs. Many little boys in babyhood pass water from excitement when the beloved Mummy takes them in her arms, just as many little dogs do when the Master comes home; this is as much sexual as excretory, but it should be ignored, and when a child obliges by performing the function for which he is held over the chamber, it is a great mistake to say "There's a good boy!" which may give him the idea that there is something moral and praiseworthy about such activities, which should be treated with reticence and made to seem automatic.

Children who escape dangerous associations in babyhood, either by the luck of good training or by their own toughness, often get even more dangerous ones as they grow older; a sensitive child is the butt of less sensitive school fellows who love to tell him horrifying things about his body, or he may even be the victim of his own imagination. And religious teaching is a still worse deforming influence. A boy in his early teens gets an erection, often an emission and hears vague talk about the "unforgivable sin", the "sin against the Holy Ghost" and so on, till he becomes a mass of fears. In other cases vague talk about venereal disease and its dangers, about "getting a girl into trouble" will do the damage, and far oftener than is suspected, the fumbling efforts of a boy and girl in the park at night will result in impotence. Ignorance, fears of making a fool of himself on his marriage night, the difficulty of having intercourse for the first time with a frightened, uninstructed and virgin bride, are all causes of impotence. I believe that the wailing of the air-raid sirens has been responsible for much of the impotence about which people have written to me lately; to have a state of sexual excitement smashed before its natural completion is a shattering experience from which only the toughest can recover easily. Love-making and dread do not go well together.

For psychological impotence which is deep-rooted only a doctor's treatment can be effective; he can discover the cause of the inhibition and help to remove it; sometimes he can help to bring the unused functions to work by gland injections and other treatments. Sometimes simple instruction in the facts of sex, and the clearing up of wrong ideas, will help enormously; often the simple fact of "falling in love" will wipe away the inhibitions and clean up the defiling ideas, and often a wife's intelligence and love will do it. But it is a task that demands the greatest possible tact and endurance from the wife, complete

unselfishness and considerable knowledge, all of which are difficult to demand of a young woman who is bewildered, nervy through the repression of her natural feelings, and probably very ignorant of sex psychology.

One of the greatest problems of impotence is to prevent it from making the wife neurotic, sour, embittered and contemptuous of her husband, and to prevent him from losing his self-respect and confidence. If after some years of married life a woman finds that she no longer attracts her husband sexually, she is inclined to lose heart, to become slovenly in her appearance, to go about as if she were ashamed of herself, as, indeed, she is, since one of the deepest instincts of humanity is the desire to attract the opposite sex. The only thing for such a wife, if she does not wish to smash her marriage and make a new life with someone else, is to find something she can do with success; not just playing bridge or, indeed, any game; she needs something creative, since the creative side of her life is frustrated. You often find, if you look beneath the surface, that the passionately house-proud woman is a woman whose husband has ceased to make love to her; she is using up her emotions on polishing floors and brasses. Gardening, caring for animals, working with children or sick people, running a business, cooking, making clothes and, of course, any sort of artistic work like writing, painting, music and dancing, are all "ways out" for the wife whose husband is impotent. And the happier she can get in such work the more likely is she to help him; if she becomes ill, neurotic and miserable, he knows that his condition is the cause, and this makes him wretched, and even more impotent.

Anything two such people can share—even washing up the supper things!—is a link between them; an adopted child would be an even greater link and may keep them both sane and normal, and anything that can develop comradeship, friendship, mental interests such as reading or music, will help very much; indeed, this close community of interest may, in time, find its expression in physical contact and normal living.

¶ Now I am coming to a point where I know many "modern" thinkers will disagree with me. By modern in this sense I mean that philosophy of life which preaches frank individualism, the doctrine of "I do what I want to and nothing that I don't want to". This is how I look at it. Marriage is a partnership implying certain things; there comes a time in all marriages when one of the partners is not as keen on sexual intimacy as they used to be; perhaps monotony has crept in, perhaps

the mind is filled with the image of some other object of love that has to be denied but is obsessing and insistent. As most people to-day still believe that love is a fixed quantity, and that love of one person makes impossible love of two or more, the average man or woman falling in love with someone else switches over every atom of sexual emotion to the new person.

Perhaps increased knowledge of the nature of love will revolutionize this way of thinking in time. Each new love or attraction that comes into our lives should enrich us; if my husband falls in love with another woman she should enrich him so much that he should have a lot more love to give me; but things don't work like this in our present stage of thought, except amongst very rare people, and here is where self-sacrifice comes in. My personal experience is that one does not understand deeply what love means until it ceases to be an easy and spontaneous thing and becomes a thing requiring self-sacrifice and self-discipline; we love most the people to whom we give most. If you come to a time in your married life when you find that you have changed towards your partner, when there is no longer any thrill in love-making, even though you still love and respect him as a friend, try to realize, first of all, that this is probably only a temporary thing. At such a time frank discussion is possible in some cases; explain your feelings, try to find out the reason for them and, if possible, go away for a few days; while two people whose relations are strained are together, misunderstandings crop up because words meant kindly are taken unkindly, and little mannerisms will flay jagged nerves unendurably. Get away from each other so that no new annoyance can happen, so that you will get a new perspective on each other, and if there is no serious barrier between you, such as a new attraction, you will probably come back with the problem solved. If, however, you are nursing in secret a love for someone else, even though you have decided that you cannot have them and are determined not to smash your marriage, you have to make up your mind to be very just to your partner; in most cases, if you are going to let the attraction go no farther, it is best to keep it all to yourself because there is no point in worrying someone you live with, someone endeared to you by many ties. Try not to let this love for the other person interfere with your attitude towards your partner; remember that he has not changed, he still loves you and wants you in the old way that used to be so happy. And my experience is that the very force of the will-power needed to carry on in

a normal way makes you grow so much spiritually that you are capable of even deeper love in the end. Every love, every intimate friendship with another human being, widens the personality and deepens the emotions so much that a new romance and depth should come into married life when you have to suffer in order to keep it going for a while. I don't say that one should try to act or to stimulate a spontaneity that is not honest; but I do think one should at least be receptive and fall in with the other's wishes rather than let him or her suffer a sense of chill or separation.

I suppose anyone who is willing to talk about sex to men and women, boys and girls, and who can do so without getting flustered, acquires quite an amount of rather valuable information in time. I have found that people talk very frankly to me about sex, and I have formed some interesting conclusions from their confidences and from my own personal experience. The most important is my firm conviction that the vast majority of people go through life without experiencing sexual pleasure worth the name. They marry in ignorance or with foul ideas; some of them look upon the first night of marriage as an orgy, others as an ordeal, while quite a number of them regard it as a sort of surgical operation. How any mutual respect survives such an initiation beats me entirely; and very often it does not.

If intercourse is an ordeal, it means that one or other of the partners in it has had their minds warped by wrong ideas which can possibly be cleared out by the sort of information I have given in this book, although often such ideas can only be rooted out by psychological treatment, if they are of long standing. If intercourse is regarded as an orgy, a sort of slipping off the rails and letting everything rip, the sense of mutual shame that it arouses will kill any possibility of friendly life together during the daytime, and will soon wear out even the thrill of the body. If people love each other and will use their bodies to express this love, there is nothing the body is capable of that is forbidden; lust is a good, clean thing, but when it is purely lust of the body it is terribly disappointing. Some people are physically impotent—that is, the man cannot get the necessary erection to perform the sexual act, the woman cannot feel any sensation when he does so. But a vast number of people are psychically impotent; they are capable of an orgasm, and their intercourse bears the same relation to ideal connection as listening to the Fifth Symphony with perfect hearing and watching it played by an orchestra when one is deaf.

I discovered for myself, by experience, that intercourse is

not worth while when it is purely a physical thing; it may give relief to the body—but so does a dose of Epsom salts; it may calm the nerves—but so will a bromide. And what a pity to regard such an exquisitely sensitive act as either a purgative or a sedative! When people tell me they don't find anything worth while in the person they have married, I often feel how the poor things are living on the mere fringe of Life, and have never known there is anything beyond the fringe. The sex act is not worth much when purely physical; when mind unites with mind and spirit with spirit, using the body as their instrument, then something of surpassing beauty is achieved. People say to me in a puzzled way, "I can't understand myself; I just can't help rushing into sexual intercourse, and then I laugh at myself for having taken the trouble to do something so futile, so silly." And of course they have never had real intercourse at all. That is why I hate promiscuity; physically, every normal man and woman should be capable of intercourse with every other man and woman, but they would get nothing out of it; it is doubtful whether animals get anything out of it except the sense of obedience to a blind urge, and that is not good enough for human beings. Men and women are pursuing the possibility of union with the Ideal; there must be an aesthetic appreciation of each other which may be roused by physical, mental or spiritual qualities; there must be some sort of chemical affinity which leads them to choose a certain "type". Above all, there must be a sense of equality, of mutual respect, of mental kinship and spiritual union. Copulate with your body by all means, but let the thing inside your body—call it what you will—also enjoy union. Then you will know what sexual connection means. The fusion of personalities of which the physical act is the merest symbol, the self-revelation and self-realization which come in the moment of self-loss when you merge with another person for a time, are not only a taste of the most perfect happiness possible to human beings, but also of tremendous value to individual development.

Sir Thomas Browne, who, three hundred years ago, had found out as much about love as most human beings need to know, says: "United souls are not satisfied with embraces, but desire to be truly each other . . . this noble affection falls not on vulgar and common constitutions but on such as are marked for virtue. He that can love his friend with this noble ardour will, in a competent degree, affect all." But in these days of enlightenment need there be, in this matter of love, any "vulgar or common constitutions"? Cannot everyone be "marked for

virtue"? I think so. Those of us of this present generation who have been too bitten by materialism, too tortured by puritanism, to love spontaneously with every fibre of our beings, can, by painful straightening out of the warped and twisted mind, become lovers; and our children need never know such warping or such narrowing influence.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

I DON'T LIKE TO emphasize the difference between men and women; all modern trends seem to be breaking down these differences—men are becoming gentler, more passive, women more aggressive and active in labour, commerce and the world of ideas. But physically there are great differences, and you cannot understand ideal sexual intercourse unless you realize these differences. I think the ancient symbolism which makes the Earth a woman and the Sun a man is very true. The earth lies passive and patient until the sun awakens her to life and fertility. The natural woman is passive sexually until her lover arouses her. This is quite natural; the man, being the fertilizer, is able to have a more violent and active life, while the woman, who is the nurturer of life, cannot be so active, since new life takes toll of her strength and demands that her body shall not be exposed to risks because it is the vehicle of the coming race.

When a baby girl is born she already has inside her the organs of sex and the seeds of new life from which her children will be born. During childhood there is very little development of these organs, but in the teens, when the growth of bone and muscle slows down, the sexual organs begin to develop rapidly. In a woman or girl these organs are much more internal than in a man or boy, because the woman's organs will be used, some day, as a cradle for a new child. A woman's sexual organs are as follows: the ovaries, the Fallopian tubes, the womb, the vagina, the labia and clitoris. The ovaries are little oval bags inside the abdomen, one on each side, and inside them seeds or eggs are formed. Once a month one of these seeds grows bigger than all the rest and forces its way out of the bag that encloses it. The ovaries are very near to the womb, which is a pear-shaped bag of very strong muscle with the narrower

part hanging down into the vagina, and, at the top or wider end, two openings opposite the ovaries, with numbers of fine, thread-like muscles waving about, rather like the legs of a spider but much finer and softer. As soon as the seed is loosened from the ovary these little muscles seize it and take it into the womb. It forces its way out of the womb, bringing with it a certain amount of the lining that forms there, and causing bleeding, known as the monthly period. If there is a seed from a male inside the womb, the two seeds rush together and join, and soon become imbedded in the wall of the womb, staying there for nine months to form a baby. As the baby grows, the womb stretches until it becomes very large; when the baby is ready to be born the womb begins to contract and pushes the baby out; in a very short time after the birth of the baby it is its normal size again. If women have too many babies, and have them quickly, the womb does not go back to its normal size but remains soft and flabby, just as a piece of elastic does when you have stretched it too much, and the next baby cannot be born naturally, while the woman's figure becomes ugly and sloppy and she cannot live an active or happy life.

The womb is not sensitive to the touch as the rest of a woman's sexual organs are, but the vagina (a Latin word which means sheath, since the vagina is a sheath for the man's penis) is very sensitive, and so are the outside parts, the labia, or lips, of which there are two small ones tucked inside the two larger ones covered with hair; but the most sensitive of all is the clitoris, which is a little knob-like organ between the labia. Most girls will have noticed, when washing themselves and so on, that the clitoris changes; sometimes it is quite small and soft, but if it is stimulated by touch, or if the girl is excited by thoughts of sex, or by love-making, it becomes hard and much more sensitive. This is because when people kiss or make love, Nature, who doesn't bother about convention or convenience or anything but love-making and baby-making, sends a message from the brain to the heart, which begins to pump blood about the body much more quickly than usual. Some of it rushes to the surface of the body and brings a flush to the cheeks, but most of it goes to the sexual organs, which, in a woman, include not only the parts I have already described, but also the lips and the breasts, making the lips redder and causing the nipples to harden and become very sensitive to the touch, while the clitoris hardens.*

It is now necessary to describe a man's sexual organs so that it is easy to see what happens. These are very much like a

woman's in many ways, but because her womb is several inches inside the body to protect the seeds and the new baby, the man's organs are outside and of a shape to penetrate to the womb easily. There are two small bags called testicles in which the seeds of new life are made, enclosed in a bag called the scrotum, which is situated between the thighs. Leading from these is the penis, which is usually quite small and soft; a tube runs down the inside of the penis connecting with the bladder and the testicles, and all round the testicles and this tube is a covering of spongy material filled with thousands of little veins. Unlike a woman, sexual sensation in a man is mostly concentrated in the penis, the tip of which is the most sensitive part of the body, and the testicles. When he kisses the girl he loves, blood begins to rush to the area round the penis and testicles, making the penis very hard and much bigger than usual. In a man this happens quite quickly, partly because as a general rule a man is much more easily aroused sexually than a woman, and also because he has usually been looking at her and thinking how much he wants her before he gets as far as kissing; that is, quite a large part of the work of sexual stimulation has been done before he gets as far as a kiss. During an engagement, when as a general rule love-making has to stop half way, the boy takes a great deal of trouble to explain to his girl how perfect she is, how he loves her, how he wants her, and his lips and his hands supplement the message of his voice. What is so tragic is the fact that, after marriage, the average man entirely forgets to make love at all. He seems to think that his wife is always ready for his embraces and for sexual intercourse. I know of hundreds of cases, told me in correspondence and in actual words, where there is not even a kiss as a preliminary to intercourse, and where the man, having deposited semen in his wife's vagina after about two minutes' connection, is perfectly satisfied. Then later he wonders why his wife makes excuses to avoid the boredom or the actual disgust of the proceeding. Many wives tell me that they are thankful for monthly periods when they need not submit to the indignity of intercourse, and how they tell lies about its duration to prolong the time of relief; others tell me that they work up a quarrel just before bedtime as an excuse for refusal; others wake the baby at bedtime and pretend that he will not go to sleep, hoping that the husband will get tired of waiting and fall asleep himself. Others simply endure it with gritted teeth, letting the man use their bodies and making no response; others, more optimistic, try their best to make some response and wonder why they cannot

enjoy what their husbands and other women appear to enjoy.

I will now try to describe the ideal sexual connection, which should begin very much before bedtime. It should begin by the wife thinking of her man doing his daily grind, coping with the foreman or the manager, adding up columns of figures in which he has no personal interest, battling to sell to people goods they don't want to buy, planting cabbages in the broiling sun, crawling over a coal face to dig out coal. "He is doing this for me, to keep going this home we share, to buy things for me, to enable us to live together. If he hadn't got me—and the children—he could walk out on his job if he was prepared to rough it, when things get hard for him; he could spend his wages on himself, he could have nicer clothes, more pleasures, holidays, luxuries. Oh, I do love him!" And he should be thinking as he does his work, "She is there at home, making the place nice, cooking meals, running the house. or out at business. She shares her life with me. I was a lonely sort of creature before I met her; she has made all the difference. I do love her!" A man or woman who meet in this spirit when the day's work is done have already done something towards the love-making which should prelude sexual intercourse. Something more is done when they see each other, when he notices some grace of movement, she some strength or beauty in him, which arouse all sorts of associations of other times when grace and beauty have been apparent in, perhaps, less humdrum surroundings. The ideal atmosphere for sexual life is that created by the fusion of tenderness with desire—tenderness aroused by a mutual appreciation of service, desire aroused by a mutual appreciation of qualities, mental, spiritual and physical. Sexual desire may be aroused when you see how beautifully your wife has polished the house and cooked your dinner; you feel so appreciative that you must give her your very self; it can be aroused by her tears over loss or trouble, for you feel such tenderness towards her that you must merge yourself in her; it can be aroused by watching the beloved play a game of tennis, romp with a dog or a child, or walk down the road in the sunshine; it can be aroused by your admiration for some achievement of the beloved in the intellectual world. A young couple, both musicians, staying with me once, were playing as a duet a Beethoven Symphony, and got so thrilled and excited, not only with the music itself but with the intense sense of union it gave them, that the moment the last note was played they hurled themselves into each other's arms, kissing passionately.

Later they disappeared, and the boy said to me afterwards, "You have to finish that sort of love-making in bed; kisses aren't enough!" I thoroughly agreed with him, though I wished they could have gone into the woods or on top of a hill to "finish the love-making". They were in a very exalted mood, and there is a vitality about love-making in actual contact with the earth that is quite different from the bedroom atmosphere; maybe it is electrical—I don't know.

But you see what I mean about the mental and spiritual prelude? Desire and tenderness fusing until you long so deeply for union that you must, in the words of the Prayer Book, "become one flesh". And you see how much you lose if you come in in the evening, receive no greeting of love and expectancy, bring no such greeting with you, eat a meal in bored silence, grump over a book or some other pursuit all evening and go to bed, to be roused by contact with your wife's body to a desire for mere sexual "relief", which has the same spiritual, mental and physical value as the business of emptying the bladder or the bowels.

But supposing you have been making love in this subtle and beautiful way all day, and bedtime comes. Even then there is much to do to make the union perfect; kissing should begin it, because the contact of the lips sends the first message towards the other sexual areas; touching and caressing increases the flow of vitality. Every person is different, and it should be a joy to lovers to find out the parts of the body which are most sensitive to touch. I cannot see why anybody should be shy about this; nobody feels shy when they stroke the velvet of a horse's nose and feel a sensuous pleasure, or when they rub a cat's ears and hear it purr with delight. I can't see why a man should not feel pleasure in stroking his wife's breasts, or why she should not be as openly appreciative as the purring cat when he does so! By this time the man will probably be in the condition when he is ready for intercourse; the spongy tissue round his testicles and in his penis will be engorged with blood so that the penis is erect and hard, but it is not at all certain that his wife will be ready yet. Her reactions are slower, because her sexual area is so much larger and more diffused than his. He should find, by touching the clitoris and vagina with his fingers, if she is ready. The clitoris should be hard and erect and the vagina should be moist. There are some glands just inside the vagina which, when a woman has reached the stage in intercourse when she is ready for actual connection, discharge a fluid that makes connection much easier and pleasanter. If this discharge

has not taken place, gentle touching and pressing of the clitoris and vagina will bring it about, and lovers should be sufficiently unembarrassed to tell each other when the right moment has arrived. The penis is now inserted and moves backwards and forwards in its "sheath", the woman moving her hips and legs to attain the utmost rhythm of movement. At first it is unusual for the man and woman to reach the climax (the orgasm) together, but a little practice and adjustment will soon bring it about. Quite often, with a skilled husband, a woman will have two orgasms during one connection; if she has none, her husband should not withdraw and leave her; stimulation of the clitoris will bring about the orgasm fairly quickly, and this can either be done with the fingers or by pressure of the man's body. When a woman is in poor health, and quite frequently after childbirth, the glands are not in good working order and do not secrete or discharge the lubricating fluid. A little vaseline on the fingers will be a great help in that case.

Many men find it very difficult to control themselves enough to restrain the emission until their wives have had the orgasm, and it is not a thing any man can do at first. It is entirely a psychological matter. The young man who has had cheap sexual experiences is usually uncontrolled and has been hitherto thinking entirely of getting the most out of the pleasure for which he is paying, so he has not been in the habit of considering his partner. Concentrating on his own pleasure, he has reached the climax very quickly. If he will concentrate on his partner's pleasure and forget his own for a few moments, he will find it increases a thousand-fold when it is part of a joint act.

The question of position in intercourse often arises; I am repeatedly coming across people who think it "wrong" to adopt any but the posture common in this country—with the woman lying on her back, the man on top of her. A girl wrote to me recently telling me she had run away from her husband on the honeymoon because he had suggested her taking the upper position; she thought he was asking her to do something perverted. There are any number of positions and the best thing is to experiment and find out which suits both people best. Sometimes it is necessary for the woman to put a pillow under her buttocks to allow easy access; a man of the passive, gentle type, more woman than man, which is so common nowadays, often finds great pleasure in taking the underneath position, while the sort of wife such a man usually marries—the masculine, dominating type—likes to take the active part necessary to the one who is on top. Sometimes the position with

the man lying down and the wife sitting on his thighs is most pleasant, although it does not admit of kissing at the moment of connection, which so greatly adds to the pleasure. Nobody can possibly lay down any hard and fast rule about position; at least, there is no rule except the one—don't let it get monotonous. People who have been married for years have sometimes discovered a new position and realized how much they have been missing hitherto. Lovers should be able to discuss this matter frankly; after all, if you play tennis a great deal with a certain person, you discuss your game with him; if you dance together you try to find out the best way of fitting in your steps to each other. Why not do the same in this game or dance of love?

The question of how frequently to have intercourse troubles many people, although it should not. If the desire for it comes, as I suggested at the beginning of the chapter, from tenderness or appreciation and not from greed, it will be impossible for this question to arise, but a safe rule is to do it only when both want it. It is a great mistake to do it too frequently during the first months of marriage, because young people are often greedy of sensation and pleasure, and being really accessible to each other for the first time, they tend to overdo it and become satiated. A fast followed by a feast is a wise rule to follow in most things, and it certainly applies here. If a young man is greedy of his own pleasure he will soon have very little left; he takes all he can from his partner, tires of her and begins to look round for other thrills in his dissatisfaction, not realizing that in the one woman he probably had enough thrill to last him a lifetime if he had not wantonly wasted it. Most people tire of a thing that is too easy, too accessible. But if a man will take trouble to make love each time, and to make each union a thing of perfection, he will not be tempted to do it too often, nor will he tire. It is the people who don't get very much out of intercourse who want it often, and with different partners.

Some women are troubled about connection during menstruation and pregnancy. Those who feel their desire increased during menstruation often feel worried, thinking there is something disgusting about such a thing, disgusting and unnatural. All mammals have connection at this time, and there is nothing unnatural or disgusting in it; a woman who has been initiated into birth control measures at a clinic or by a doctor can stop the menstrual flow for an hour, if the aesthetic side of the business worries her, by using a rubber pessary. During pregnancy there is often, too, increase of desire, and unless intercourse

makes a woman feel ill, there is no harm in it, unless the doctor expressly advises against it, although for the last two months it is inadvisable as a rule. A healthy and normal woman often feels such an increase of vitality during pregnancy that her sexual desires are very greatly increased, but her husband should be careful not to exert any pressure. A good position to adopt during pregnancy is as follows: the wife lies crossways on the bed with her legs over the edge, her back supported by pillows if necessary; the man kneels or stands by the bed with her legs clasped about his hips. In this way pressure is avoided; the only disadvantage is that close embrace with the arms, and kissing, are impossible in such a position.

In the seventh month it is inadvisable because any pressure might bring on premature birth; in the eighth month it is wiser not to have connection unless the wife very greatly desires it, and then only with a sheath; in fact, this is perhaps the only time when a sheath is a wise adjunct to connection. It has been found that many women become infected in various ways during intercourse; I don't mean that they are necessarily infected by venereal germs, although, of course, they may be, but by ordinary streptococci, which do very little harm during ordinary times when one is well and the body can resist them. But if any of the everyday germs that are always present, especially in a warm, moist part of the body, get inside the vagina during the last month of pregnancy, they may infect the baby's eyes, etc., as its head remains in the vagina for varying periods during birth. Above all, that terrible disease, puerperal sepsis, which is responsible for the deaths of thousands of mothers in childbirth, may be caused; after childbirth, for a short period, the whole area of the inside of the womb is raw and bleeding, exactly the spot in which germs find their best breeding place, and a husband quite innocently may cause his wife's death or his baby's mutilation by the introduction of these germs during intercourse. I know the last months of pregnancy are a nervy time for both husband and wife, and that sexual abstinence will only add to their nerviness, but men and women who have been frank with each other and have taken the trouble, previously, to experiment with each other's bodies, can, with advantage, practise mutual masturbation at this period, rather than risk intercourse or become nervy through doing without it.

All this emphasis on *how* to have sexual intercourse may, perhaps, bring the atmosphere of a hospital operating theatre into one's mind, but it should not. Modern man and woman want to know the reason for things, they don't like a "hit or

miss" method of doing anything; until a few years ago people just ate food at meal times, and often mixed together the wrong things and missed out many necessary things, but scientific teaching is showing us why we eat certain things at certain times, in conjunction with certain other things, and what these articles of food do to our bodies. But it is only silly, superficial people who say, "Oh, don't tell me about proteins and vitamins. That quite destroys a meal." If it does—well, they are just nitwits! In fact, they are usually posing. In just the same way, understanding the actual mechanics of sexual intercourse helps you to enjoy it better and to avoid inflicting pain, humiliation and disappointment on someone you love. But for goodness' sake study the technique, just as you study the notes in music, and then put thoughts of technique aside. The young husband who wrote me a solemn letter telling me that he had taken an earlier edition of this book to bed with him during his honeymoon "and frequently referred to it" was undoubtedly painstaking, but rather a trying lover, I imagine. If you can get it into your head that everything has to have some sort of physical expression, even to the most sensitive and frightened, I think intercourse becomes simpler; if you speak to someone you love, those words are being made by part of the body; but something more than physical prompts the thoughts behind the words; if you look at the sunset or the moon on the sea, you are using your eyes, which are a bodily organ; but something more than physical makes you glory in the light and colour. In just the same way, when you make love you use the body to express something which is more than physical, but unfortunately you use parts of the body which centuries of false teaching have made seem either ugly, nasty, or even sinful; yet everyone, except the unhappy people so warped that nothing can clean their minds, usually finds that love and reason together will burn up most "complexes".

CHAPTER FIVE

BIRTH CONTROL

ALMOST ALL FORMS of animal life, except man, have some type of birth control; in most animals there are definite periods of the year when breeding can take place; wild animals and birds are so busy with the work of keeping alive that they have

not much energy for continual breeding, so their numbers are reasonably restricted; savages exercise a sort of birth control by various taboos which keep husband and wife apart, and by very protracted breast-feeding: it is quite common amongst savage tribes to find a child of three feeding at the breast, simply because there is no food amongst non-pastoral people, except the mothers' milk, that is fit for children of tender years. Animals which live a pampered and easy life, like cats and dogs and domestic vermin, breed much more regularly, but even amongst them we exercise a sort of family limitation by shutting up a bitch during her breeding season and by destroying innumerable kittens at birth, while there is a constant war going on against rats and mice whose indiscriminate breeding, it is estimated, costs the country something like ten million pounds a year.

The only breeding which moralists would have us make no attempt to control is the breeding of human beings; we are supposed to take what God sends us in the way of children, forgetting that God—if by God one means Order and System in a universe where Order and System are always fighting against the devil of disorder—has nothing to do with it, and that Nature is a prodigal and wasteful devil that always makes too much of everything, and then sits back and laughs while this crawl and mutter of life fights with other life for existence. A human being with all its potentialities and vast implications, its appalling capacity for happiness and unhappiness, is the most precious thing on earth, yet millions of human beings are born every year who will never have a chance to exercise any potentialities at all, never be anything but frustrated and enslaved by circumstances—just because people are too lazy and too sentimental to put some restraint on breeding. I am not going deeply into the sociological aspect of family limitation. That has been done by many writers of much wider sociological knowledge than myself, and until the war made the labour of people's hands of vital importance to the continuance of the nation, you needed only to visit the Labour Exchanges in any industrial town, to see masses of men standing about idle and wretched because there was no work for them to do, and to realize that—at least until population is more reasonably spread about the earth's surface and wealth won by work more reasonably distributed—there were too many people, and will probably, even after the war, still be too many people unless this reorganization is done scientifically and honestly. The indiscriminate breeding of "cannon fodder men" and serfs or

"hands" was encouraged in the past, and is to-day encouraged in Fascist countries because War Lords need masses of men to hurl into battle against their enemies, and employers liked to be able to offer one job to twelve men and take the lowest priced and highest skilled bidder for the job.

The upper classes have, for a long time now, been striking against too large families; when the proletariat does the same it will once more hold the right to bargain. I can see no condition in which parents would be wise to have as many children as happen to them except either a condition of Socialism under which every human being would be a worker with the right to exactly the material wealth and leisure won by his own labour, or a Distributist condition where every unit, whether family, community or individual, would be self-supporting. And even then there would be the mother's side to consider. And we are very far, still, from socialism or distributism or any other system which will make for justice and happiness to the mass of human beings. In the past the only population control was the same as that we exercise with the cat family; thousands of babies died at birth or in infancy, thousands of human beings were wiped out by epidemic disease. As pre-natal and post-natal care increases, as sanitation improves, the death rate amongst young people is decreasing; individuals will have to decide for themselves about their own responsibility towards the population until the law steps in and possibly organizes it more wisely.

To take the personal side of it. Religion has done much to confuse people's minds about the rightness or otherwise of birth control, although it is difficult to see where morality enters into the matter at all; the Prayer Book starts many people's married life with the solemn injunction that marriage is for the procreation of children, and thus gives them an uneasy feeling that any sexual enjoyment that does not produce children is wrong. It was not until Freud and his school announced, and proved, that sexual intercourse was just as important in its effect on the individual as the race, that this threat was removed from people's minds; previously, people had either solemnly copulated to produce a family, done it less solemnly and hoped for the best, although they accepted the worst, in the form of another baby, with resignation; or else they were frankly defiant, telling themselves that, even if it were wrong, even if it damned them, it was worth it.

The release brought to the human mind by the teachings of modern sex psychology is incalculable. Thousands of people

are to-day enjoying married life without the spectre of a large family enslaving the parents and depriving brothers and sisters of a chance in life; thousands of women in middle age are to-day healthy, youthful and happy, thanks to birth control, where, a generation ago they would have been lying in a graveyard or living a semi-invalid life; anyone who is not convinced of the necessity of birth control from the woman's point of view should take a walk through a country churchyard and read the tombstones recording the deaths of wives between the ages of forty and fifty, and realize that most of them were offered up on the altar of child-bearing. Anyone should, like myself, produce three babies before the age of twenty-four, to realize how such rapid child-bearing can not only debilitate one's health, but also give a young woman an unbearable burden of nursing and mothering. A woman who has babies rapidly is worn out physically, and usually suffers badly in the forties; her nerves are frayed by bad nights and constant self-sacrifice; her mental life stagnates when she is exclusively in the company of unformed minds and has no time for reading or social intercourse, and very often her husband drifts away from her because she becomes so dull and boring in her obsession with feeding bottles, napkins and prams.

Most young married people want a reasonable number of children, those who don't want them should not be the objects of shocked disapprobation that they sometimes are at present; there is no virtue in parenthood, whether voluntary or accidental, and the people who don't want children are quite obviously the people who would not make ideal parents; yet in marriage and in normal sexual life they may find great happiness and be really useful members of the community. If a boy and girl marry and decide to have a family, it is almost always wiser to wait a year or two; there is a great deal of adjustment to be done when two comparative strangers, from differing types of homes, settle down inside the four walls of a home together, and it is better that this adjustment should be made when the wife is in normal health and not in the peculiar psychic condition that so often accompanies even the healthiest pregnancy. Better, too, that they should have settled down to mental stability together before bringing in a creature so sensitive to atmosphere as a baby. It is better, too, that they should have time to play together in their first years; they will, almost inevitably, be short of money, but they will have a zest for life that should be used in taking pleasure while they can, in having as good and interesting summer holidays as possible, in going

off for week-ends hiking or motoring, in occasional visits to theatres or concerts, all of which will be impossible when babies come—except amongst the wealthier—and none of which will be as enjoyable if one waits till middle age, when the children are grown up. I spent my youth caring for babies, thinking I would later do all the things I could not do then; now that I could do them I haven't the energy; and even those I do are not so thrilling as they would have been in youth.

That is why I would advise marriage while young, even if it means the wife continuing her money-earning work, and put off having babies until she is at least twenty-five. Even after that it is a mistake to have babies too quickly; it is wiser to space the family carefully so that the mother is able, physically and mentally, and the father financially, to cope with each child as it arrives. I speak very feelingly here after my own bitter experience of continued child-bearing in conditions of terrible poverty—an experience which is repeated every week of my life in the letters I get, several hundreds a week, from women whose lives are unbearable; some of them, before the war, were trying to keep a large family respectable and healthy on unemployment pay, others on a man's small salary with the spectre of dismissal hanging about the place and another child expected; some of these were women whose menfolk had been out of work for years and who have been lucky enough to get a well paid job to keep the home going. Some of them, to-day, are soldiers' wives or women doing important war work who do not want to stop the job, either from a desire to make a little money while it is to be made, but far more often out of a sincere desire to "do their bit to smash old Hitler". They know that pregnancy would mean ruination and are trying, as they pathetically say, "to live as brother and sister"; others are people who have three or four children and know that another would mean financial disaster. Others, again, are women suffering with various diseases which mean that child-bearing will risk their lives; others are tubercular, or married to men of vicious habits or mental weakness which they do not wish to transmit to possible children. In their letters I am struck by the fact that often the doctor advises them to have no more children and gives them merely the advice to occupy separate rooms. Surely even the most antediluvian doctor to-day knows the risk of such advice to people's nervous health? Very few doctors do anything but suggest the disastrous method of withdrawal. It is difficult to see how birth control information can ever be spread with reasonable and scientific thoroughness;

it strikes at too many complexes; it is made a religious issue in some cases, a moral issue in others; other people actually still think it harmful. I would like here to mention a few of the popular misconceptions about it and try to dispose of them.

Firstly, there is the idea that birth control means abortion, and abortion, morally speaking, is regarded as murder. Birth control has nothing whatever to do with abortion; it simply means that some method is used which will prevent the male and female seeds from meeting and fusing to form a child.

Then many people believe that the quinine which forms an important part of many birth control preparations is harmful. I have never found a doctor who agreed that it was; quinine is given as a tonic in many illnesses, and if it is absorbed through the vagina it will probably have as tonic an effect as when taken by the mouth; it is at least quite as harmless.

Another common argument I get in correspondence—this is always from men—is that it is “wrong” to waste semen. This is an idea that probably dates from very ancient and primitive times when semen had a sacred significance and when it was considered to be a man’s strength and his whole vitality; this terror of losing semen often crops up in psycho-analysis; a man is quite often frightened into impotence by the fear of losing his “strength” if he has an emission; my correspondents argue that to expel semen in the act of baby-making is not “weakening” because it is being put to some natural use, and Nature will, presumably, make compensation for the act of self-sacrifice. The fact is, of course, that there is always a “waste” of semen, indeed, semen is not the important thing at all, but simply a fluid in which the spermatozoa or life germs float, put there by Nature to prevent the delicate germs being killed by acid in the penis; in any case only one seed of the millions expended during an emission is used when a baby is conceived, and repressed men lose millions more in involuntary emissions during the night. Schoolmasters, clergymen and fathers are often responsible for setting up this complex in the minds of boys. Talking to them of masturbation, they speak of the “waste of the life force” in an emission, explaining that this is very weakening, and giving the boy the impression that expulsion of semen is harmful. Like everything else, it is weakening if it is done too much and done by artificial stimulation, but what I know of impotence in men and the suffering it can cause their wives and themselves, convinces me that it is better to let a boy alone than to set up this complex in his mind. He will

probably lose his desire for masturbation when his energies are directed into creative channels.

Another very common idea is that the use of sheaths causes consumption. I was neighbour once, for some years, to a woman whose eldest child was fifteen and her youngest a baby in arms; in all her married life she had never had one menstrual period, having spent all her time either pregnant or nursing; her husband was firmly of the opinion that any birth control method would give him tuberculosis. His obstinacy killed his wife in the end; she died at thirty-eight, giving birth to her eleventh child.

When people begin to talk of the difficulties of birth control from the aesthetic point of view, I have every sympathy with them, but a little frankness and tact can dispose of this difficulty, especially if the birth control method adopted is one that the woman can use. No birth control method can be beautiful or poetical, but surely it is better than constant nervous stress or excessive pregnancy? It would make any very sensitive man temporarily impotent to have to use a sheath, and besides being ludicrous and undignified things, they are destroyers of pleasure. They entirely prevent the sensitive skin of the penis from having the delicate contact which is so pleasurable; they are extremely expensive, and finally, they are not absolutely safe, because even the best of them, if of sufficient thinness to be pleasant, are liable to break.

There is a method—not very common in this country yet, but used, I understand, in Germany and America—by which a metal ring or ball is inserted in the womb, as it is considered unlikely for conception to take place when a foreign body is present in the womb. But a doctor told me that she had attended a confinement where a gold ball preceded the baby's birth by a few minutes, and doctors are fairly agreed on the inadvisability of introducing a foreign body which may be an irritant and possibly cause cancer. We do not know enough about this method yet to be able to condemn or advocate it definitely.

Some women, especially in religious circles, place their reliance on a supposed safe time in between the monthly periods, but biologists will not commit themselves about this safe time; a female seed may have remained in the womb and be fertilized; a male seed may find its way there and wait until the ovum (the female seed) comes into the womb at the next monthly period. This method has always seemed to me not only unscientific but highly illogical, because the people who use it would preach loudly against any artificial method of birth control,

although they are quite willing to sneak in, as it were, when Nature is not looking.

The women who rely on syringing after connection are also running great risk. The male seeds move with incredible swiftness, and one may easily have entered the womb long before it is possible to syringe; syringing, too, has a great deal to be said against it on psychological and aesthetic grounds; it means that intercourse is given something of the atmosphere of a surgical operation, and the close embrace and sense of union that should be the aftermath of perfect intercourse is broken by the wife dashing out of bed to the bathroom; if there is no bathroom and it has to be done in the bedroom it is too nasty to contemplate; poetry and romance can be destroyed so easily and often so unavoidably. It is foolish wilfully to murder them. No woman can afford to make herself undignified and ludicrous in the eyes of her lover.

There are a good many chemical preparations on the market, and I have been trying for years to collect information about their reliability or otherwise. Such information is very difficult to collect. A woman will tell you she has used — for ten years and that it has let her down in the end; you begin to question her more closely and find that she admits it is quite possible that on that particular occasion she was sleepy, or worried, and can't be quite sure what happened. These are the women, of course, whose husbands have intercourse without preparation; many of them tell me that they wake up to find the sexual act well in progress in the middle of the night. I, personally, would not rely on any chemical preparation alone; most of them are far too easily and quickly absorbed, and it is possible that life germs deposited outside the vagina entirely may get inside later. There are some excellent chemical preparations, but it is not my business to recommend any by name; it is safe to use anything containing quinine, but it must be used in conjunction with a rubber cap. Any birth control clinic or doctor willing to give birth control advice will have their own preventive preparation to recommend, and there is no need to pay inflated prices.

The principle involved in any of the contraceptive ointments and creams is that a coating of grease lines the inside of the vagina and the neck of the womb, and that this grease should contain some chemical that will destroy spermatozoa; one of the reasons why these things are not always effective is that there may be a slight discharge of fluid from the womb which prevents the greasy substance from coating the entrance and allows spermatozoa to get inside.

There are several reasons why the rubber cap or pessary is the safest method of birth control if used in connection with a chemical. One important thing in birth control is to cover the mouth of the womb during connection with something that will not easily come off when friction or movement occur. Another important thing is to introduce into the vagina something that will destroy the life germ entirely so that, when the cap is taken off, or it should come off by accident, there is no danger of conception. A further, and, I think, highly important thing is that the preventive should be of such a type that it can be affixed much before love-making begins and left untouched afterwards, and that it should be left entirely to the woman to manage it. If this is done, one discussion, preferably before marriage, on the subject should be enough, and the whole subject can be dismissed, with all its atmosphere of a doctor's consulting-room or the less pleasant suggestion of a rubber shop and surreptitiousness.

The one great disadvantage of the rubber pessary is that it is quite unsafe to fix it for oneself the first time. It must be done by a qualified person, because it is of extreme importance that it should fit tightly yet comfortably, and, in fact, not to be felt at all. When a doctor fits it she leaves it for a day to make sure that it is adhering properly, and she shows the patient the easiest method of inserting and removing it—by no means a simple job at first, apart from the fact that women brought up in an atmosphere of prudery have even been known to faint when asked to insert a finger in the vagina. It is necessary to visit the doctor after some months to make sure that the cap has not lost its elasticity and is still effective.

Quite a number of modern doctors will perform this service for patients, and a few of the older generation have moved sufficiently with the times to do so. There are also in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland a number of clinics where, for a very small fee and the cost of appliances supplied, married women can obtain advice and help; there are also a considerable number of Municipal, County and other public medical officials who will advise a married woman or send her to a clinic, and a few hospitals will give the advice; many private medical women and men will fit a pessary and sometimes give psychological help to nervous women about birth control. The addresses of clinics can be obtained from The Family Planning Association, whose war-time address is 196 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth; from the Society for Constructive Birth Control, 108 Whitfield Road, Tottenham

Court Road, London, W.1., and from the National Council for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics, 153a East Street, Walworth. Clinics will not advise unmarried women, and many will not even advise a girl immediately before her marriage, though a few private doctors will do so; I can get no definite information as to whether Clinics will advise young childless wives who wish to put off having a family until the end of the war because they are in the Services or doing war work of various sorts, but a young woman of intelligence can usually use for herself the information contained in a book like this if she cannot get help officially. During the honeymoon it is best for the husband to use a sheath, unless his wife has found a doctor willing to fit a cap before her marriage; this should be used in conjunction with any good contraceptive ointment which can be bought at most good chemist's shops to-day; after the honeymoon a visit to a clinic may be made. The thing not, on any account, to do is to go to a rubber shop, buy a pessary and fix it yourself, because it will probably let you down.

Most women living in isolated country districts or on such poor wages that the train fare to a town with a clinic is impossible, can use a home-made method. Before the war I advised hundreds of women to use a small fine sponge about the size of a large egg, dipped in olive oil and quinine. This is a very primitive method and very effective, but both olive oil and quinine are unobtainable now; even linseed oil is not easy to get, but castor oil or liquid paraffin will, if inserted on a fine sponge, provide that greasy covering I mentioned before, while the sponge provides some sort of covering for the entrance to the womb; in emergency a sponge dipped in equal parts of vinegar and water will do as acid destroys the spermatozoa; boracic acid, a teaspoonful to a tumbler of warm water, on a sponge is also effective, but boracic is unobtainable in most shops just now. This sponge, well washed to make it soft and then wrung out, soaked in the oil or whatever is used, is inserted in the vagina at bedtime; it should not be felt by the woman, and should not hurt the man at all if the sponge is really a soft one. I have known cases where men complained of soreness caused to the penis by the quinine; a little vaseline would probably remove this trouble. The sponge should be left in for at least sixteen hours after connection; it can then be taken out, washed and kept until next time. Some women who are afraid of touching the vagina might find it easier to tie a piece of thin embroidery silk to the sponge and leave it outside the vagina so that it can be drawn out more easily. This is not nearly so

simple as a rubber cap; I know it is at best only a poor substitute for a more scientific method taught at a clinic, but so far as I have discovered in ten years' correspondence with women, it is effective and is certainly the only thing possible for many poor women.

I think I should say a word here about withdrawing. This is one of the biggest enemies of married happiness; when I begin to read a letter from a married woman who tells me that she loathes intercourse and has felt no pleasure in it for years, I usually know that a few sentences further on I shall read that her husband has practised withdrawing; often, too, when a woman tells me that her husband has left her after some years of married life, I think, "Oh, withdrawing, I suppose", and almost always I am right.

To take the man's side of it; he obtains a certain amount of physical pleasure from this sort of intercourse because of the actual mechanical effort and the relief caused by the expulsion of semen. But his mind is not at rest, he cannot think of anything but getting away in time to save his wife from pregnancy; he cannot, as we say, "let himself go" and he never really enjoys intercourse as his romantic dreams had told him he should; so he begins to blame his wife for this and sometimes strays to another woman, perhaps one who understands birth control, or is too irresponsible to care what happens. In the end he may become impotent or suffer from a distressing trouble which takes the form of having an emission even before he can touch his wife. Usually, if nothing so drastic happens, he becomes very nervy.

With the wife the case is even worse. Even in the most normal marriage the woman, in this country at any rate, is usually much slower in reaching the climax of intercourse than her husband; a male animal or a male in a primitive life, not educated out of naturalness, usually has to do a good bit of courting and pursuing before he has intercourse, and this excites his mate so that she is ready for his embrace. Far too often civilized man does not make love at all; his idea of intercourse is a sort of hit-and-run raid, after which he goes peacefully to sleep while his wife lies awake feeling nervy, raked up, disgusted and, finally, hating intercourse if she does not hate the man, though that often happens. This is all aggravated when withdrawal is practised, because, usually, just as the woman may be reaching the climax it is all over. I happened to mention, in an article once, a young wife who had an attack of hysterical weeping after intercourse, and that week over a hundred hus-

bands wrote to me telling me that their wives were like that. In each case withdrawing was the cause of the trouble.

Finally, withdrawing is not a perfect means of birth control; a man may, no matter what stress he puts on himself, lose his head once; moreover, some men have a slight emission during the process and this may contain spermatozoa.

Sexual intercourse is a highly skilled accomplishment, needing considerable knowledge of its actual mechanics, considerable understanding of its psychological approach, and the greatest possible tenderness and delicacy; a sensibly planned family and the most scientific and aesthetic method of birth control will remove some, indeed much, of the strain and ugliness which often do so much to wreck intimate relationships.

CHAPTER SIX

PROBLEMS OF MARRIED LIFE

I REALIZE THAT what I am going to write in this chapter will offend a number of people. There is a bitter Trade Union of Wives which gets up in arms at once against anyone who dares to say a word for the husband who strays; there is just as bitter a feeling amongst men that their wives are their personal property; but I think the narrow outlook on marriage is widening a little. I have been very much struck, during the past two years, by some of the letters I have received from women especially. They are often working women who have obviously never read any sex psychology—chauffeurs' wives, railway porters' wives and the like; and they say, "My husband has fallen in love with another woman but he says he loves me just as much as ever. My mother says I must leave him, but I don't want to. Would it be very wicked to stay with him when I know he is living with her sometimes?"

A letter like that could not have been written by such a woman ten years ago. It seems as if the working woman's native common sense is showing her that the old conventional ideas of monogamy were impossible, and convincing her that a man is not necessarily worthless if he wishes to make love to another girl. At the same time the divorce laws of this country, with their insistence on infidelity as the only cause for divorce, are doing much to keep alive the old pernicious idea that a

man is not fit for marriage if he lies with another woman. A friend of mine was forced into this anomaly in her desire to get release from a man who was making her life a hell. She could not divorce him for drunkenness, cruelty, laziness or dishonesty; she had to wait until he spent a night in an hotel with a woman—a thing that did not upset her in the least, and a thing that need never hurt any marriage relationship. But there are still to-day thousands of women, of ages varying from twenty to sixty, sitting in their little homes heart-broken because they have discovered their husband's physical infidelity, making any future marital relationship impossible by their attitude of anger or of martyrdom.

Suppose you are a very young wife with, perhaps, a baby or two who takes up most of your time; money is scarce, you can't afford a proxy to look after the babies, you have no kindly relative or neighbour to do it. Life has become rather dull and weary, a constant round of tradesmen's bills, rent, rates, doctors' visits, broken nights and hard work. You get tired and dull; you nag a bit; you pour out a sea of worries on your man when he comes home at night. He has been working all day and is fed up with everything. You can't go to the cinema or the dance hall with him; he goes alone and finds a friendly girl, or maybe has guiltily asked a friendly girl at the office to come out with him. Honestly, although I have been that young wife with the teething babies, the bills, and the washing dangling in every available corner of a small flat, I don't blame him a bit! I hated to be left in alone evening after evening, picturing the little courtesies he was showing to the other girl, thinking of the fun they were having which he and I used to have. But I had enough justice to see that a man is profoundly uncomfortable amongst babies and washing, that the average man gets no fun out of going out alone. I wanted to go out myself, but as I could not, I did not see why he should be imprisoned.

I remember a neighbour of mine, a policeman's wife, who caused a scandal in our district some years ago. She was a masterful, dominating sort of person, and insisted on her husband being present in the room while her second baby was being born. Midwife and doctor protested, but she got so hysterical that they gave in. At the moment of the baby's birth the husband, who was sitting by the bed, annoyed them by fainting. "Push him on the floor and leave him," said the harassed doctor, and then the nurse discovered that he was handcuffed to his wife's wrist; she had insisted on this so that

he should be forced to see what childbirth cost her! All the women in the district were up in arms at what they considered the woman's "indecentcy", but dozens of them, at that very moment, were handcuffing their men just as thoroughly by meeting them with tears and tempers if they went off alone for an evening. I don't say that women should bear all the burdens of home-making and baby-care, but it is not the men's fault that they do.

This is a social question which can be solved only by a complete change in the economic and domestic situation. When wages are more fairly arranged in relation to a family's needs, when homes are more communally run so that every woman, instead of pottering over a stove, a sink and a cradle all the best days of her life has an individual life, this problem will right itself. The Doukhobours in Canada seem to have solved the problem by living in communities with the domestic, garden and nursing work taken in turn, several days at a time, by each woman. The penguins seem to have solved it by appointing some of their number to mind the eggs and the babies while the others take it in turns to go hunting or playing. I cannot see why we in this country could not be as wise as the penguins.

Meanwhile, women are left at home with a sense of lost love, lost romance and imprisonment, and men who began with a sense of sexual fidelity to the one woman are being driven into sex affairs with other women partly by the dullness and unattractiveness of overburdened wives, partly by the nagging of these disillusioned, bewildered women, and partly by the attractiveness of the more leisured, less harassed, unmarried girl who has money and time to spend on personal attractions. The wife cannot cope with the mistress, in a social circle where money is scarce and the pretty things money can buy are denied to her; in the deep things she can hold her man every time. The trouble is that very few men are sexually stirred by devotion and self-sacrifice; the mistress's subtle flattery, her newness, her prettier clothes, her association with times of leisure and pleasure, are all much more thrilling than the spectacle of one's wife changing the baby's napkin, scrubbing the floor, or, red and shiny, bending over the washtub in which one's shirts and pants are being laundered, or cooking one's steak and chips over a hot gas stove.

This is all very unideal. I know, and so do you, that a man *ought* to love his wife because she does all these things, but, in the mess we have let love get into, sexual emotion is often divorced from it and is only aroused by more superficial charms.

When the economic position changes, much of the trouble will disappear. But the male desire for change will not be removed by any economic palliative. I doubt whether it will ever change. I think it is part of the male constitution, and I don't see why it should not be. I don't see why it should hurt women that they are essentially conservative—in other words, that they want to “stay put”—while the average man has periods when he wants to rove.

If men and women are real friends before marriage their love will survive all the less lovely aspects of domestic life, as it is doing in millions of happy homes; if they were not real friends, and have not much in common, the sacrifices of married life will not cement their relationship, they will destroy it. If sexual attraction was their only reason for marriage, their marriage will last only a year or so, because sexual attraction with nothing behind it soon burns out. But how can these marriages between more or less fine people who are beginning to feel stale and flat with each other, and seeking in another person the thing they had hoped to find at home, be saved from disaster? There is no reason for disaster, unless the two people are so utterly incompatible that there is nothing on which to build a common life. In that case the only sane and courageous thing is divorce, and divorce as speedily and good-humouredly as possible, before either has become embittered and lost their faith in life and their spirit of adventure. But with most people infidelity should not cause tragedy and disruption; in some cases it might even enrich the marriage considerably.

Let me give you a picture of the average sort of infidelity. The man has begun to go out with a girl other than his wife, and she begins to feel hurt; it may be that he was only seeking companionship and change and had no thought of a sex affair at first; by degrees his wife gets so irritable that his relationship with the girl changes; instead of her being merely his playmate for odd occasions she becomes the recipient of his confidences; his wife doesn't understand him, his wife is always nagging, his wife bores him, and so on. This sympathy is very insidious and sweet and he begins to associate his wife with worries and quarrels, the other girl with peace and entertainment and sympathy. Very often it is the wife's suggestion that he is in love with the girl that has put the idea into his mind, and once there, it grows until it is a fact. As he says to himself: “I've got the name, I might as well have the game.” He runs away from his wife's unhappiness, the home becomes a place of torment to him, and at last things have grown so impossible that either

he and his wife live in a state of armed neutrality or even break up the marriage.

Now I know it is hard for a woman, young or old, to feel that another woman is taking in her husband's life the supreme place she once took, but if she will only be very honest with herself she will discover that much of her misery and annoyance comes from two things: her outraged sense of possession, and her feeling of guilt. Married people, even to-day, are possessive; they imagine that marriage should shut their partner into a tight little prison into which no member of the opposite sex should ever venture, and they defend their "rights" to the husband or wife violently. But how can any one person have any rights over another? Why should the fact that your husband has lain with you, worked for you and shared your intimate life, shut him away from all other women? I think your husband has a duty to his home and children in that he should not spend on another woman money needed for these things. But I don't think he has a duty to love you and be with you if there is nothing in you to make him want to; and that is where the feeling of guilt, the nagging sense of failure, creeps in and makes the deserted wife hate herself so much that she instinctively transfers much of the hatred to the causes of it—her husband and his mistress. "Where did I fail him?" she asks. Has she been dull? She must admit that she probably has, although she defends herself by talking of all the work she has to do. Has she got unattractive? She probably has; a busy mother has little leisure for hairdressers and beauty culture, very little money for clothes, but above all very little time, which is even more important than money in the quest for beauty.

They often write to me, these women, telling me all they have done to tie their menfolk to them, not realizing that it is actually this tying which has been at the bottom of the trouble. And supposing a wife realizes that she has made mistakes, how can she remedy them when she is feeling sore and hurt? Very likely, although she loves her husband and longs for a resumption of the old happiness, she shrinks from physical contact, or, if she submits to it, does so without giving anything vital to it. How can she give anything when she feels he has taken everything from her?

To begin with, I think she should try to take the whole thing less seriously—a difficult matter with all the pressure of public *spoken* and *written* opinion telling her that her husband is a cad, although the majority of people hold the honest opinion that he is nothing of the sort. She should try to remember that the

male character is adventurous, that it loves change, that it finds its greatest stimulus in hunting and capture, and that these things have very little to do with the steady affection which takes the place of thrill in most marriages of a few years' standing. She should spring-clean her mind of these old ideas of possession and try to see that her husband need not necessarily be taking anything from her even if he does love another woman. She should talk the matter over with him frankly and, for a time at least, keep off physical contact, unless by so doing she will widen the rift between them. I mean, if physical contact outrages something in her, she should not submit to it until this spring-cleaning process has been done. She should not let him see that she is being unbearably hurt; if she does, she will give him such a sense of guilt that he will not be able to face her, and may even run away from her when he longs to be with her, because he cannot endure the spectacle of the misery he has caused. She did not win her man originally by tears and scenes; she won him by the charm of her personality, and if she wants to keep him, she will have to turn off the tears and scenes and try to be what she used to be—and she should not find it difficult to keep his love, because she is the same woman who once won him and she now has a thousand memories associated with her which endear her to him.

I do think modern women have to be prepared to face the fact that they must share their husbands if necessary. Women of past days had to do it with the added misery of a psychological burden, the burden of feeling that it was morally wrong. To-day we know that it is nothing to do with morals; it is a matter of temperament, of the make-up and functioning of one's glands, the arrangement of brain cells, and the aura in which one was brought up. If a man is what is called "highly sexed" he may need more than one woman; if he has psychological kinks he may fall violently in love with one woman—his wife, say—for a time, only to fall as violently out again, victimized by his own visionary pictures of that "not impossible She" who will always remain impossible for him until his kinks have been straightened out. The Don Juan type of man, always running round after a new woman, is not callous, not casual probably; he is most likely in love with a divine vision of womanhood which he sees for fleeting glimpses in many women, but which always eludes him on close contact, simply because he cannot face reality and see that his vision may be made manifest in "a creature not too pure and good for human nature's daily food". It may be—most often is—that he is the victim of excessive

mothering and is looking for a mother every time he makes love to a sweetheart or wife; it may be that his mind is so active that it suffocates in close prolonged intimacy with any one person. A thousand things may happen to make monogamy impossible for him without such self-mutilation that his life is impossible. If his wife can be merciful to all his difficulties, if she can try to understand his temperament, she need never be afraid of losing him. After all, what does she want with him? His physical presence? She will get that if there is any compatibility between them at all and if she can give him freedom to seek his life elsewhere sometimes. His sexual passion? She may not get that; sexual passion rarely lasts very long, although there may be a lifelong habit of sexual intercourse which is satisfactory or not, according to what you want out of sexual intercourse.

Marriage is an almost impossible relationship as the world is at present. Everything fights to kill it; economic difficulties, morality, religion, domestic arrangements, psychological muddles, ignorance, all do their best to destroy it and make it hopeless. The wonder is that so many marriages survive in any sort of decency and happiness. It is not always the finest people who make a success of marriage; often they are so sensitive to all the terrible implications of intimate life that they make a muddle of things where less fine people would ride roughshod over human sanctities and make a jog-trot sort of success. The happiest marriages seem to be those where there is a very strong belief in the inviolability of the human personality and the absolute right of human beings not to interfere with each other's inner life. This implies a fairly high state of development, but why not aim at that? Why be content to stick to old, bad beliefs, when they are ruining so many lives? I think, too, that the happy marriage is one where both are building something; it may be a home and a garden, a local position and usefulness; it may be a family of children; it may take the form of artistic or commercial work; it may be the development of an ideal; people who are busy in these things do not, as a rule, stray from each other. If they do, there is something so valuable left that they cannot stay apart for very long.

At its best, marriage can be the best of all human relationships; it can be better than blood relationship because one has actually chosen one's partner from the whole world. It implies mutual service and mutual protection, and the very fact that it so often implies sacrifice is one of its advantages; the self-discipline needed to live courteously day after day, year after year

with one person is enormous and should produce a very well poised and tolerant character; the troubles shared bring about a sense of comradeship like nothing else on earth; the security of a happy marriage is the most secure relationship possible, since each knows the other's limitations and is not disappointed by them. Such a marriage does not come by luck; it requires intelligent choice of partner, intelligent understanding all the time and constant watchfulness against selfishness.

The best advice I can give to young wives whose husbands are straying is: "Be tolerant; study simple sex psychology and try to understand him; give him his freedom and keep your head. Don't cry and don't nag." I know this is not easy; the best way to accomplish it, apart from developing yourself mentally by reading and education, is to get out into as wide a life as possible. Make social contacts; go in for church or political or social service activities and keep your body fit by exercise. If you sit at home and mope about your ruined life your husband will begin to detest you. And your life is not ruined. Many a woman who has let herself get dull and stupid through some years of marriage gets such a jolt when her husband strays that she takes stock of her life and reorganizes it so that, later on, she realizes that she had never begun to live at all until the jolt happened.

You will notice that I don't advise any young wife to find a lover when she is neglected by her husband. A lover should not be made use of in that way; it is not good enough for any human being to become merely a stop-gap or a soothing syrup. I don't say you should not have a lover, any more than I think a man should not; but you should have one only if something vital in you is awakened by him and awakens something vital in him. To have a love affair just because you are bored or miserable, or just because you want to make your husband jealous, or to show him that "two can play at that game", is disgusting. A love affair should come from the abundance of vitality and life which flowers when two personalities come in contact. It may be friendship, or it may demand physical expression, but it should never be sought for or fallen into sloppily. It should be climbed up to; you have to do some amount of hill-climbing into every human contact that is worth while; the only ones not worth while are when one finds them by slipping into a gutter. Usually if a young wife can keep her head she keeps her husband and her happiness too; she may find that she must share him with others; she may find that he comes back to her after one rush into "romance" and that

that has been enough for him. In either case she should bury the past and never refer to it again, but try to build a common life on such good foundations that nothing can shake them. Finally, she should try, no matter how difficult it is, not to make the trouble a family matter; once she begins to discuss it with his people or hers, criticisms are made, an aura of disapproval surrounds him, and when the almost inevitable reconciliation takes place she feels she has made a fool of herself when she remembers her wild words of disloyalty and criticism.

There is only one case, I think, where a woman should fight another woman for her husband, and that is when quite obviously the other woman is a bad lot. I know it is easy to think that the woman who is attracting your husband is a rotter, but try to be just to her, try to distinguish between general rottenness and your own natural feelings of resentment against her; if she is a gold-digger, if she tries to monopolize him and take him entirely away from you, although you know you and he have much to give each other, if she is one of those emotion-vampires who get right under a man's skin with her demands for sympathy, sensation and sexual satisfaction, then I think you can feel you are just in thinking her rotten, and you can buckle on every bit of armour, polish up every weapon you possess and ride out like Britomart to rescue him. You won't look particularly dignified while you are doing so, because no matter how knightly you are in your own estimation, no matter how shining your armour, he and most others will see you as a jealous wife trying to retain her hold on her man. But what does it matter? If you cannot rescue him you will have had a good fight and have done your best; if you do rescue him, he will be unendingly grateful once he realizes the truth. Of course you will not respect him very much; you will feel motherly and compassionate. But if you are the sort of woman who *can* rescue men, you are not the sort of woman who will get much more from your husband than his dependence on you, because such women attract only weak men; the strong men who might have been their fitting mates are off on their own rescue-parties. Perseus never wants to mate with Britomart; if he did we should, perhaps, begin to produce supermen.

The problem of the middle-aged woman whose husband falls in love with a young girl is a much harder one because she has so little to hope for or to live for; she has grown—through perhaps twenty years—to look upon him as the hub of her world; all her thoughts and activities centre round him. They should not, I know, but they do, and she is stranded. She has given all

her energy to him and her children, and is often suffering from the vague ill-health that accompanies the "change of life". She literally has not the strength to pick herself up or to control her reactions. Her nervous health suffers from the cessation of the jog-trot sexual life they have been living, which has kept her body serene, even if it may have left her a little starved emotionally. Her children have grown up and do not need her, and she sees this young woman taking from her the thing that seems essential to her very existence.

In such a case the wife will be wise to make an outside life for herself and to try to find, in social contacts, the emotional outlet her husband has dammed back. It is most improbable that the affair will last; men in the late forties and fifties suffer very much from what may be called a "cutie-complex"; a man of that age is so much younger, physically, than his wife, and he is beginning to realize that he has, in spite of his feelings of youthfulness, not too many years left; he finds that the dull, almost mechanical exercise of the sexual function which their marriage has degenerated into so often is not enough for him; he finds himself being stirred astonishingly by young women—contemporaries of his daughters—and he finds them surprisingly receptive. Often they are flattered by the attentions of an elderly man; often they enjoy his trained technique better than the fumbling of boys just discovering how to make love; often, too, they appreciate the difference between an established man with money and a boy fighting his way to a position, and are quite willing to take the "good time" an elderly man can offer them. But it is inevitable that the affair will soon burn out. The girl will fall really in love in time with a boy of her own age, and then the man will seem rather pathetic and rather ridiculous to her; she will find out, if she tries to force matters, that a man who has been married for twenty years finds it very difficult to uproot himself, and he usually sheers off in horror if she suggests a romantic elopement. He, too, will get tired of the moods of youth, its restlessness and uncontrol, its gaucherie and childishness, and he will begin to long for a little peace and quiet again. That is where the wife who has kept her head gets her reward, because he usually comes back to her with a sense of tremendous relief. There is hardly one case where a married man over forty has eloped with a young woman when he has not been driven to it by his wife's lack of compassion and humour. There are few cases where such an affair has not done both of them good; it has got the wife out into a wider life, made her take an interest in her appearance, often led

her to re-educate her mind, and it usually gives the man a wholesome appreciation of the many things he had taken so much for granted that they had lost interest for him.

Frankly, infidelity of the body need not spoil marriage; it is rarely the unfaithful partner who does destroy it, but the other one, because he or she cannot stand the relationship; often, too, the man's mistress or the woman's lover are the cause of the trouble. They want to possess, to smash the marriage. But in itself physical infidelity is not enough to smash a marriage unless it is the serious sexual attraction that comes from a deep mental and spiritual affinity which demands all or nothing. Then it depends on the characters of the people concerned whether they will cut the new relationship out of their lives and continue in the rather bleak path of duty and responsibility, or throw everything overboard and take what seems like happiness; I personally feel that, if I were a wife whose husband wanted to leave me and live with someone else, I would much prefer the break up of the life we had built, the loneliness and the feeling of failure, to acting as his gaoler and keeping him tied to me from pity or duty. Curiously enough, too, the hurt does not last long; the woman who is capable of standing aside to let her husband find a fuller life elsewhere has such qualities of character and mind that she will be able to make life worth living even if she is seventy years old when she starts out on her new quest.

I confess that I am deeply anxious about the future of the home in this country after the war; it is not going to be easy for young women who have been in the Services or the factory to settle down in the rather narrow groove of the home and its tasks after a communal life, nor is it going to be easy for her to organize her home and direct her children after the inevitable submission of her intelligence to someone else's in most types of war work. It is not going to be easy for young men to come from the long, often not sufficiently strenuous days of Service life such as the first three years of the war have known, nor for those boys who have gone in for violent and thrilling adventure, to settle down in civilian jobs and little, narrow homes after demobilization. Money is going to be a great snag, too; with no homes to worry about at present, vast numbers of young married people are spending their earnings as they like, and when they begin to think of living together they will not even have a bed or a table to start with. They have rushed into marriage for a number of reasons, some romantic, some sordid, some pathetic, some honourable, and they are not going to find home-making easy

or very pleasant. This is something I beg young married people to think about before the end of the war, so that they will be prepared for difficulty and not blame each other for it so much as circumstances. Those who have rushed into marriage without love will inevitably fail, because it takes a great deal of love, patience and endurance to stand intimate life with anybody.

Another of the big problems of the war is the wife who has been lonely while her husband has been overseas for a year or so, either serving in the Forces or shut up in a prison camp; this girl, unfortunately, is not compelled to work and has often started a love affair out of boredom, not out of any serious affection; then when a baby is started she wakes up to the disastrous effect of her weakness. Sometimes she wants to give up husband and children and go away with the baby's father, who in most cases had no such idea in his head; occasionally she is determined to hold on to her baby whatever it costs her, but usually she wants to get rid of the baby the day it is born and hide its existence from her husband.

There is one thing on which I feel very clear; that is, that a man in the Forces abroad should not be told; much less should a prisoner of war know that his wife has been unfaithful, his children perhaps distributed amongst relatives and his home broken up. A man in prison or in the Forces is completely helpless; if he hears that wife, children and home have been destroyed in an air raid he will suffer almost unendurably, but his suffering will be full of pity and he will be able to idealize his lost ones into shining angels; the man whose wife has "gone wrong" will feel frantic with anger, disillusioned, humiliated, let down; very few men will be big enough to see that loneliness and sex starvation may bring about momentary loss of control and possibly produce a baby. When girls write and tell me they are having a baby in such circumstances, I beg them not to let their husband know till he comes back; confession is a relief to a woman, I know, but she does not deserve such relief at her husband's expense because, at the risk of being called Victorian and moralistic, I can't help saying that I feel infidelity to a helpless man, caught in the grip of the war machine, a dreadful and almost unforgivable thing; she should have had enough self-control and character to live the soldier's wife's bleak life and never have put herself into such a position that loss of emotional control was possible.

Her baby is sure to be a great problem; most Homes will take a baby of an unfaithful wife only if her husband forgives her and is willing to make the baby's removal a condition of

trying to start the marriage again; she will encounter scorn and all sorts of family trouble. But it is obviously her duty to work to support her child, either in a Home or with a foster mother—it is most unlikely that the baby's father can help, as he is probably a married man—and more than probably he will not reply to her letters telling him of her condition. It was only to be expected that this total war should have brought about disastrous disruptions in the sex life of almost everyone; men congregated together, away from their wives, away from the steadying influence of home and children, will do regrettable things; women with home and children taken from them, young girls sent from one part of the country to another, without the influence of family and social circle behind them, will make dangerous experiments in emotion. Married people deprived of normal married life may find the body too strong to be controlled sometimes. A social worker coping with crowds of pregnant young women said to me yesterday, "After all, it's better for our boys to get their sexual relief with nice, decent girls than on the streets"—but that seems to me to be a very degrading attitude to take. We hear so much on the wireless and read so much in the press about this being a war to vindicate the rights of human beings and to build a better world for the next generation. Surely it is treating a human being in a degrading way to "use" her body for sexual relief, or to make her pregnant. I cannot help thinking that self-respect and respect for other human beings would dispose of most of these war problems of sex life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRAINING YOUR BABY

THE BUSINESS OF parenthood should begin long before you conceive a child. With most of us it doesn't, and the first baby takes us unawares; we don't know how to feed it, but that is a matter easily remedied with all these excellent Mothercraft Centres about, to which young mothers can go for advice and training; even fatherhood is being made the subject of lectures nowadays, so, as far as physical care goes, nobody need be at a loss. It is the psychological side of parenthood that is so little understood yet, and babies arrive into a home where they

are either petted and fussed, experimented with, or neglected. All things considered, the neglected child is the most fortunate.

When you know that your first baby is coming, sit down and think things out. What is going to be his place in your home? Is he going to be a nuisance to you or a joy? Is he going to be brought up a social being or an anti-social one? If you decide these things before he arrives, you can have the atmosphere of the home fairly serene; a baby is very receptive to influences about him and soon feels if you are dealing with him uncertainly, making mistakes and experiments.

The coming of a baby should not upset a home, except during the first fortnight when his mother is necessarily laid aside from normal life. There should be none of that walking about on tiptoe with hushed voices, no switching off the wireless or silencing the piano because he has gone to sleep. There should be no upset of the normal, social life or domestic routine, except just as far as his actual physical needs demand. He is a new member of your home, arriving into an organization already working for the convenience of everyone; he should not be allowed to interrupt it, either for your sake or, more important, for his own. A baby at birth should be let down gently into the difficulties of life, but you should have firmly fixed in your mind the idea of making him a social being; his mother is not to be his slave—he won't be able to have slaves when he grows older, and it will be a severe and injuring jolt to him—if his mother spoils him—to discover how harsh everyone else can be. A new-born baby is the perfect picture of an egotist; he wants his food and will scream for it; he wants the comfort of his mother's body and will scream for that; he feels vague discomforts and screams about them, always realizing that succour will be forthcoming. Obviously, then, if you want to start him in life able to paddle his own canoe, you will see to it that he never needs to make any violent demands for succour or service; you will make his sleeping place so comfortable that he likes to be in it; give him fresh air and as much solitude as possible so that his health is not destroyed; you will feed him with absolute regularity so that he neither cries from hunger nor from indigestion; you will wash him and clothe him sensibly, so that his body is soothed. Then, if you are wise, you will leave him alone for at least his first six months.

The greatest job any human being has to tackle is the job of adjusting himself to his environment; weak people succumb to an environment which suffocates them; selfish, anti-social people make an environment what they want it to be, even

if they enslave others in the process; strong people—those whose own minds and bodies are working smoothly—see what is wrong in an environment, and have enough strength of purpose and clarity of thought to set to work to reform it. The baby whose early months are full of discomforts may become anti-social in his demand for comfort at any cost to others; the baby who is alternately petted and scolded may become the weak, docile creature who will never make anything of life. The baby who starts without any wish to enslave his mother in providing his own comfort will probably grow up straight in mind and body, and be the cool, normal, objective-minded person the world is craving for to-day.

Aim at absolute regularity in your treatment of your baby; his bath, his feeds, his sleep times should go by the clock. If he sleeps badly, it is probably because he needs turning over; he is too helpless to move himself, and babies must suffer agonies from lying in one position for hours. I found that it was wise to turn the child on to his side after he had slept for an hour, when he would go on sleeping in comfort. If he cries, and you take him into your arms, he begins to associate the pleasure of your smiling face, your soothing voice, your comforting breast and arms, with the process of squalling, and he'll squall his way through life if you are not careful. Don't you know grown men who discovered this squalling trick in babyhood and who go on throughout their life making themselves unpleasant in order to blackmail you into giving them what they want? A baby is so sensitive, so malleable, so amazingly clever at tumbling to things, that he is spoilt for life if once he discovers that pleasant things come to him as the result of unpleasant behaviour, and if he ever gets straightened out afterwards it will only be by very cruel, hard knocks.

The next thing baby will learn from his early environment is the disastrous gospel of possessiveness. He associates his mother with all good things, with the pleasant repletion of feeding, the just as pleasant relief of excretion, and the comfort of cuddling. When he sees someone else touching her, he feels that his comforts are in danger and he begins to squall. Here the mother must use tact and make him share. She must let him see that her kisses for his father or his sister do not mean that he is to be deprived of kisses. I know this sounds very trivial, but anyone who has learnt the immense importance of these early impressions from the revelations of psycho-analysis will understand that it is far from trivial; it may, indeed, warp a whole life. If the baby begins by feeling that he must possess

his mother completely in order to be happy, he will grow up with the idea that his happiness depends on someone outside himself. From these early attachments to a mother come innumerable complexes that ruin a man's adult life; if he is allowed to wallow in mothering, mothering will seem to him the only possible relationship with any woman, and he will grow up to start on one of those dreadful woman-quests which never reach a goal, since he is looking for a woman who will satisfy his sexual needs, and at the same time fit exactly into the mother-image with which his mind is filled. Or he may transfer his idea of mothering and being dependent on to a religion, and fly to the breast of Mother Church for the drugged security he gained as a baby. I suppose that every man who runs through a whole chain of love affairs, always finding the woman unsatisfactory, is really not seeking a lover at all, but that shadowy atmosphere of baby-dependence; every man who rushes into "movements" of any sort with the idea of losing himself in them is looking for the mother's breast. Every young man who treats friends and sweethearts as so much property, every husband who enslaves his wife to his needs and demands, is the victim of a too excessive mother. Probably, too, the man who later enslaves employees without any prickings of conscience is the man who in babyhood was allowed to be the King of the Castle and never taught to respect the rights of others. That is why I said on a former page that the neglected child is likely to be happier than the cosseted child. It will, at least, grow up with some spirit of adventure and of independence; it will be able to stand on its own feet.

Having decided to take the advice of a Mothercraft Centre about your baby's sleeping, feeding and clothing, and having made up your mind to bring him up at once an individual and yet social, how are you to do so apart from making him so physically comfortable that he will not need to assert himself all the time? I think the first thing is to try to be impersonal yourself. I often read stories in magazines about young couples who bend over a baby's cot saying, "This is bone of our bone, etc. . . . *our own baby*, a precious human being to *mould* as we will!" That is really dreadful. A baby is an individual the moment it draws its first breath—before, for all I know to the contrary—and that idea that the parents have achieved something in producing it, and are going to achieve more in "moulding" it, is too frightful to contemplate. Such an attitude on the mother's part produces the child whose mother says proudly, "Baby won't let me out of his sight!" A woman doctor who

works at a birth control clinic told me lately how difficult it was to get a young baby or even a toddler to let its mother put it down out of her arms while she was being tended by the doctor. It is her own fault; she is the sort of mother who revels in being martyred while her babies are young, and who will, later on, choose their careers for them and either keep them at home to "help" her or else marry them to men of her own choice; the sort of mother who will never, in any circumstances, welcome her daughter-in-law, or anyone who takes a little of her boy's attention from herself.

You must detach yourself from your baby the moment you have given him birth. Give him the attentions he needs, play with him, talk to him, arouse his dawning interest as he grows older, but do it impersonally. "Look! he's smiling at me!" cries the young mother, whose baby's face is puckered a little into some semblance of a smile by the movement of wind in his bowels. She is too much obsessed with the idea that he is *her* baby. If only she would try to see him as a bit of Life, lent to her by Life, his creator, to be dealt with honestly and fairly and handed back to Life as good a job as she can make of him by the opportunities for healthy development she has given him! Every mother must learn not to be obsessed by her babies, not to let them be obsessed by her. I think the new psychologists are right in their demand that a child shall be free, shall, in a way, bring itself up. Where I quarrel with some of them is that they pander too much to a child's natural egotism, making it, instead of an individual with some glimmering of the rights of others, into a raving egotist. It is right to make a child free and independent, not to surround its young ears with a chorus of "Don'ts". But it is terribly wrong to let it think it is the only pebble on the beach. Only *atmosphere* can bring up a child so sanely that it neither becomes exhibitionistic through neglect nor egotistical through over-notice. A mother whose own mind is broad, whose life is widened by interests outside her own little family, is too interested to be always shredding her child's character and behaviour to atoms to study its reactions to herself; a mother whose mind is active has no time to study her child's every mood, and so it has a chance to fend for itself.

A garden has taught me a lot about bringing up babies; if you want to stunt and dwarf a plant to fit it for one of those tiny Japanese gardens, you keep potting and re-potting it so that it never really takes root, never really gets a chance to grow. That is a picture of the over-fussed child; if you want a plant to grow and produce flowers, you feed it well, you give it plenty

of room and cut off sprawling side-shoots which would weaken it. If you do this, beautiful blooms are produced. If you give a child mental room and at the same time, out of your experience of life, nip off ugly growths, it becomes a thing of beauty. But be careful about the nipping off; it is safe, I think, from my own experience of children, to nip off only those tendencies which make it anti-social, and then to leave it alone; if it is selfish, let it learn that selfishness never achieves its happiness but makes it a sort of outcast; if it is lazy, let it find out that the laziness of one member of the community inflicts unfair burdens on the others, and makes it an object of hatred or compassion. And, having got it into this atmosphere of social adjustment, the next thing is to teach it how to use its body.

A child has to be taught how to feed, how to breathe, how to excrete. It is taught these things when it is very tiny. In the past there has been too much fuss about excretion, and many modern child psychologists say, "Let a child be dirty; it will be far better for it than to give it complexes about its body." I don't agree with either the fussers or the non-fussers; they are both rather cranky, I think, and I am sure there is a middle way.

A baby is naturally interested in excretion; it produces a pleasant feeling of relief after some amount of tension, and, except for crying and kicking, it is the only thing it can do for some months. But it should be the object of much less fuss than it is at present. "That's a good boy," says the mother, smiling at her baby when he has performed a natural function, and he gets the impression that he has done something wonderful. Then comes the time when he is being taught habits of cleanliness, and he discovers that the thing he used to be praised and kissed for is now a thing to be scolded or even spanked for. What a muddle in his mind! It is simple enough to get a Mothercraft nurse to show you how to hold a baby over a chamber with his buttocks just touching the edge; you should not try to do it unless you have someone to show you, as you may injure his back if you don't support it properly. It should be done as soon as he has had a meal, because almost always the stimulus of food starts intestinal and bladder action in a tiny child, and if he associates the touching of the rim of the chamber with this function he will soon learn to do it. Then leave him alone; don't, like one mother I know, put the unfortunate child on the chamber at ten o'clock and sit there firmly beside it till eleven to try to "break its will". If it has an accident, remove the accident and don't mention it, but go on patiently trying

to prevent an accident next time. And never, whatever happens, scold or smack it. I am sure that it is better for baby to be "dirty" in the middle of the drawing-room than to be bullied and spanked into being "clean". Lifelong nervous constipation is the least of the resulting troubles. Many cases of hopeless impotence in men and sexual coldness in women can be traced to spankings for "dirtiness" when they were babies; they associate the spankings with those parts of the body which Nature has, perhaps unfortunately, designed as organs of excretion and organs of pleasure, and simply can make no use of these organs except for the excretory function under the stimulus of drugs.

I have dealt with the subject of masturbation in Chapter Two, but it might be well here to say a little about the babies who "play with themselves". I often get letters from mothers in terrible distress about this; one just this month told me that a ten months' old baby touched her genital organs when being bathed and was discovered doing so while asleep. "I feel heart-broken," writes the mother. "Daddy says she will grow up to be a prostitute. Do you think I ought to put her into a strict Home before it is too late?" My reaction to that letter was to want to get out the car, rush to that home and kidnap the baby! I think all babies of mothers who think as this one did should be kidnapped!

Babies are always interested in those organs of their bodies that produce sensation; the lips, which suck, are interesting; the fingers, which move and squiggle about, are interesting; the anus and vagina are interesting because they produce sensation during excretion, if only the sensation of tension and relaxation, and of the warmth caused by the flow of urine on a napkin. Just as the baby will play with his squiggling fingers and toes, so will he play with these other interesting parts; he may discover that they are more responsive to touch than the rest of his body; if he does, leave him alone. Arrange his clothes so that he cannot touch these parts easily; give him something to cuddle, such as a soft Teddy Bear or a folded bit of shawl, and then leave him alone. If you draw attention to the habit, it takes on the added interest of being forbidden; as he discovers interesting things outside himself—the play of firelight on the walls, the glimmer of nightlights in a globe, and the memories of the day's wonderful things, he will forget all about the fun he got out of unconscious masturbation. Try to let him think that his "private parts" are no more astonishing than the rest of him; this isn't easy in a world where people can now go

about on the beach uncovered except for a sort of fig-leaf, thus drawing attention to the covered parts. But you will achieve it if you have the sane attitude yourself.

As your baby gets old enough to understand, explain to him just what happens to his food; why he eats, how the food is used by the body to make him grow, and how the waste part is dismissed from the body as useless. If mothers would do this there would be much less chronic constipation, and those stories and jokes of the "lavatory" type in which young people revel would disappear; they are jokes now because there is something mysterious and funny and undignified about excretion as it is performed at present, and the spirit of cruelty latent in most people makes them delight in such witticisms.

To teach your child about his digestive organ is a very good beginning for teaching him the other functions of his body, and as far as my experience goes, one cannot do this too soon. He should be taught every possible use of his body. Mothers teach their babies to walk and talk, to stuff food into their mouths and expel it later. They don't go far enough. The child should be given an intelligent interest in all the workings of his body; having learnt to walk, he should learn to dance and to use his whole body as a means of expressing himself; having learnt to talk, he should learn to sing, and to express himself in words as beautiful and exact as possible. Baby talk, slang, perversions of English, are all symptoms of a general sloppiness and a terrible waste of great natural gifts. A little child should learn to take a pride in all the things he can do with his body; if he does, it will prepare him for the business of keeping it healthy and beautiful, and it will make him respect it far too much to waste its activities in unworthy ways. And it will give him the right attitude to his sexual activities later. Children should be accustomed to nakedness—their own and that of others—throughout life. This is simple when there is a family of them who can all be bathed together, sun bathe together, or even, as my children brought up in a back street in Peckham did, splash about in a back yard with a hose pipe with as many children as they could persuade to get unclothed.

I am not sure that adult nakedness is a very good spectacle for young children; it is often rather repulsive; a mother with flopping breasts, a father with a tummy, or one obviously in need of a suspensory bandage, is not a vision of beauty to put into a child's mind. If you know you are beautiful, there is no reason why your children should not come into your bedroom when you are undressed; otherwise it is better for them to see

only boys and girls, young men and young women, unclothed. I think quite a lot of the nakedness cult to-day is just as neurotic as the excessive modesty of my young days; when nakedness is self-conscious it is as bad as prudish wrapping up. When it is natural to be naked—in one's own home, for instance, running from bathroom to bedroom, in one's own garden if it is secluded, on the beach in the early morning—it seems to me that nakedness is fitting; but when a group of rather elderly people meet in a room, divest themselves of their clothing and proceed to read Browning, for the most part through spectacles, and then solemnly proceed to a walled lawn and play rounders, I think they are being quite ludicrous.

The great thing is to teach a child to be proud of its body's beauty and yet not self-conscious about it; the ideal way for a child to behave is, I think, the way my Alsatian behaves; he revels in his lovely body; he jumps and runs and springs about; he will stand motionless, posing, when one tells him how beautiful he is, extremely grateful to you for mentioning it, and proud that he has been praised; and he is extremely good-mannered about excretion, making no fuss about it, but just retiring to a secluded part of the garden when necessary. I would like to see all children so sane.

It is difficult to say at what age children should be taught about sex. So much depends on the atmosphere of the home and the mentality of the children. In a home where people are natural about their bodies, and procreation is referred to naturally, there is never a time when the children have to be taken aside and told. They see the domestic cat getting bigger; they are told they must not be rough in playing with her because there are babies inside her tummy which may be hurt; they hear her nocturnal serenades and are told that she is making love to the neighbours' cat so that she can have some babies. There will come a day when the child will ask, "Am I born like kittens?" and then the mother will explain that he is, but that human babies have to have both a father and mother with them all the time, because they have to live in homes and be taken care of, since they are so much weaker than kittens.

I explained the baby question to my children in the following way (and it is curious that the two younger ones cannot remember a time when they didn't understand it, because they were told so young, while the eldest one remembers vividly that she was in a certain room with me, and what I was doing at the time—which shows that she was told very wrongly, since it should not have been such an impressive revelation to her). "Everything

that grows comes from something very, very tiny." (I had already shown them seeds inside various flowers and explained the work of bees in fertilization, but this did not come into the sex talk much except as a background. The reason I told them about flowers, cats, birds, and so on, was that I wanted them to have a feeling of kinship with all forms of Life and a reverence for Life, which is, I think, the first step towards pacifism). "Plants, birds, animals, everything come from tiny seeds, and so do people. But no plant or bird or animal, and no human being, alone can make a baby one grow. Everything has to have both a father and a mother." Usually this is all very young children want to know at first, unless they have been thinking about the subject, or are unusually intelligent. Next time the question cropped up we went over the old ground in the way children do; then I said: "Mothers are very important people because the seeds from which babies are made are inside their bodies. But all women are not mothers because they have not got a husband." (It is no use confusing a child of tender years by calling a man a "lover" in the biological sense. They can learn later on that sometimes a woman with no husband has a baby. At first it is wiser to refer to the fertilizing male as a Daddy or a husband.) "Men have tiny seeds inside them just as women have, and only when the seeds from the two people join together can a baby be made." I then told them about the womb and the testicles, and explained, by telling them to look at each other's bodies, how the fertilization takes place. A child will often ask, at this stage, if it can have a baby at once, and one then explains that in little boys and girls the seeds are not ready to make babies and that it is best not to have a baby till one is grown up, and has a home for it, because babies need a lot of care and cost a lot of money, which fathers and mothers have to earn. Later, as they grew older, when I was working in an institution where illegitimate children are supported, I told them a good deal about this problem of modern life, and explained that it is anti-social to produce a child one cannot support and cannot do one's best for. I have often been criticized for having told my children these things so young, but I am sure it is right to do so. If you don't, they become an obsession to the child.

My own girls discovered, when they went to boarding-school that they were the only ones who did not get in corners to whisper about menstruation and babies; these subjects were of no interest to them, having been part of their general education, like eating and washing. If you tell children about sex while

they are tiny, you do not arouse their emotions; if you wait until puberty, when they have quite enough emotional disturbance internally, they may either get a terrible shock, or start to make dangerous experiments. Two cases that came my way last year prove this: a girl of eighteen learnt about copulation by reading a novel of D. H. Lawrence and went insane; another girl, told very sentimentally about sex by an aunt, was so intrigued and so emotionally aroused that she seduced a strange boy the same night, and became pregnant. If you have left this instruction until a child is in the teens, you will have to be exquisitely careful how to give it; you must not shock her or make her frightened, but remember that, if she has been brought up in the sort of home where sex is never mentioned, she is probably very frightened of her body and in a panic about the male body. In such a case I would say the best thing is to tell her, first, about reproduction in plants and animals, and let her draw her own conclusions. I loathe that way of doing things, but it is probably making the best of a bad job to do it in this case. Also, you must be careful not to excite her. If, when you have described the sexual act to her, she asks in bewilderment, "But why do people do it?" it is dangerous to tell her that it is pleasurable, or she may, like my young friend, be in a disastrous hurry to find out for herself. Tell her that it is a natural instinct and that it makes people happy to do it when they love each other. Be as cool and impersonal as you possibly can. But do, if your children are still young, bring them up in a home where sex is taken for granted. This may mean rooting out many old ideas and inhibitions in yourself, but when you realize how many things in life make you blush, make you feel uncomfortable and frightened and guilty, don't you see how sad it is to bring up your children to blush and feel guilty about the things that should give them cause for pride and pleasure?

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHY NOT?

I DON'T THINK anybody has experienced perfect love yet for more than a few moments at a time; the sex impulse can momentarily irradiate life until it becomes a golden miracle; the parental impulse can, in its pride and self-immolation, make

one feel godlike at times; friendship, with its tenderness and its generosity of appreciation can lift one on to pinnacles of rapture; but all these things "fade into the light of common day" after a time, and a sense of flatness is left. I cannot see why they should fade; if they do, it is partly because the spirit of darkness in oneself sends up ugly black clouds of distrust, of egotism, of dissatisfaction, and obscures the sunshine of happiness, or else because one's own weak sight cannot pierce the black clouds sent out by other people. We of my generation—the forty-ish people—will probably now never know perfect happiness in any human relationship because we were distorted in childhood. The most emancipated of us still find, to our astonishment, relics of old puritanism in ourselves, cravings for the sanctions of religion and law and convention; we still find traces of primitive savagery in our jealousies and our fears; our bodies, even, are still at the mercy of warped minds where sexual happiness is in question. But I see no reason why we should not look forward to a happier day for our children; maybe some of us will even live to see them straight and clean and beautiful beings, using every scrap of their vitality of mind and body in work and play and love. It all depends on education; this little book touches the merest fringe of the subject, but even little snippets of information in it will give release to many, and perhaps give them a vision of something worth working for.

I can see a world where sex will be liberated from all the handcuffs law and religion have put upon it. I don't think it will ever become the mere biological process that the materialists would have us believe in; I think sex will always be linked up with the human craving for beauty, and that as men and women become more free they will be much more careful in their choice of a partner, much more fastidious. The love-choice to-day is terribly restricted by class, by finance, by the actual limitations of space; it may be, for instance, that the boy in Brighton marries a girl he has known there for years and in so doing cripples his life, when in Edinburgh is the very girl who would have made him feel a god. It may be that in a wealthy home is a girl engaged to a boy of her own class and condition, while her father's clerk or chauffeur is the man who would lead her to a life of fullness and vitality. We cannot pick and choose to-day; when economic and class restrictions have disappeared, instead of the promiscuous love-making and the irresponsible marriages of to-day we shall have unions entered into after much more careful choice and experiment.

The people who live narrow, everyday lives in their own social circles have no idea of the horrors of unhappiness going on all round them; these miseries are told to doctors, analysts, and sometimes to priests; they come the way of journalists like myself who, in one week, will get twenty letters from young things in the early twenties who rushed into marriage and are now hating each other because the little spark of sex attraction between them was all they had in common, and now that that has gone they are in prison. Sometimes I get as many as two hundred letters in one week from wives who have never felt anything but boredom, and very often sick horror, at the sexual embraces of their husbands; sometimes I get a hundred letters from girls who say that all their boys want with them is ten minutes behind the park railings in the dark; and sometimes I get a couple of hundred letters in a week from married people who are getting ill and nervous and hopeless because, in an attempt to restrict the family which is threatening to swamp them, they are trying to "live as brother and sister", as they pathetically put it. None of these miseries need be. If we bring up young people to understand the biological processes of their bodies, if we teach them to use those bodies so that they will be proud of them, there will be none of this park-railing business, none of these unwanted babies of boys and girls who have no wish for parenthood, none of these marriages entered into without a trace of mutual respect, and none of these miseries of impotence and half-life. In time, I think, we shall see that sexual union is neither a falling back into beastliness nor yet a surgical operation; we shall see it as the expression of the highest mental and physical vitality. We shall get over the idea of exclusiveness in sex and realize that the sexual act may be the ultimate expression of friendliness for one or two or a dozen people—it all depends on individual temperament. Sex will, I think, in the future, be much more important, yet much less obsessing, because it will be seen to be as natural as breathing; the man with one lung or with asthma is obsessed by the thought of breathing which ordinary healthy people take for granted; the man in the modern world, warped by ideas implanted by moralists—ideas that conflict all the time with natural instinct—is obsessed by sex to-day; when he is healed he will be naturally sexual but he will stop worrying about sex. (Some novelists and playwrights and many music-hall artists will have to go out of business, and most of the film world will disappear, but maybe they will be able to turn their undoubted artistic energies into more creative channels.) Birds

don't think about sex; they get on with it; all this year I have been watching a family of swallows who nested over the door of my study; they dressed up most charmingly in neat, shining feathers in the spring, they did love dances in the sunshine, they sang to each other, and then got busy about making a home; they seemed to share the business of parenthood quite amicably, taking it in turns to sit on the nest and to feed the babies; they taught them to flutter along the roof and then to fly. Then they kicked them out, had a good time again in the sunshine, and produced another family, which has now just been turned out. This seems to me a most ideal way of behaving; the birds don't seem to have been promiscuous and they seemed very happy together; they have not tried to force their children to become thrushes or wrens, they taught them the business of swallows, which is to find food and to fly; then they left them alone.

If human parents would behave like these swallows we should have Utopia in no time. That is not a wild statement; let us examine it. It is parental possessiveness which is at the bottom of most of our personal and world troubles to-day; the father or mother who tries to force children into grooves, to enslave them for their service, is like the nation which wishes to impress its will on other nations—"For their good"—"White Man's Burden", and so on!—and which wishes to enslave other nations to do its work. No parent has a right to interfere with a child once he has given it flesh and reared it through its dependent days to independence; those who do, either get subject children without a will or a life of their own, or else revolutionaries who waste, in kicking over the traces, all the energies they should be using in creative work and social contacts. Wars are caused in little homes because in little homes bad ideals of possessiveness and enslavement are formed; economic enslavement is caused in little homes because children see fathers economically enslaved and think it is a normal state of affairs, and because they are either enslaved themselves by family needs when they become wage-earners, or possibly go on enslaving their parents themselves.

Almost all psychological troubles that ruin marriage and friendship are caused in little homes because parents victimize children by their bad teaching, whether it takes the form of prohibitions, of sloppiness, or blank neglect. If you are about to become a parent, it is up to you, not only for your own and your children's sakes, but for the sake of the whole world, to get your ideas cleaned up before you launch on the world a human being with all its dreadful capacities for suffering and

happiness and social damage. If you think sex is something to be ashamed of, please don't have a baby till you have got your mind spring-cleaned. If you think children are property, please don't have one until you have got out of the cave days and become civilized. It is no use economists talking about production and distribution and all their other panaceas, or pacifists talking about a world-comity, if in your own home you are breeding warped and savage people. It is not a bit of use to say that until everyone does something nobody can do anything. I used to feel that; I used to think that, unless I could write books that everybody would read in millions, it was hopeless for me to do anything. Then I saw that nobody can get such a megaphone voice as that, and that this passion for world reform was one of my own complexes. So I set to work to cultivate my own garden, to make my own home a place of freedom, to give my own children room to breathe, and to show others who came into the home by chance how pleasant it is to live with people who believe in freedom. Everybody can do that. By reading and being honest with ourselves we can get straightened up, if we are not too warped; if we are, there are always psychologists who can help. There is no reason why everyone should not "grow straight in the strength of his spirit and live out his life as the light"; but everyone has to do it for himself and not to prevent others from doing it.

CHAPTER NINE

SOME PUZZLES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

VENEREAL DISEASE

War always brings a great increase in venereal disease, and the fact that it has increased by seventy per cent in this country since the war has made both the government and the public so anxious about it that it is being discussed openly in the press, on the radio and amongst people who had never heard of it before. In fact, a girl asked me recently if V.D. was a new war decoration and did one have to go to Buckingham Palace to get it! It is not a subject about which the ordinary person need know a great deal, because it is absolutely essential to see a doctor if you suspect that you have been exposed to infection from it, and very shortly it may be illegal to conceal it.

Venereal disease always spreads in war-time, because so many men (and this time, women) are uprooted from their homes and normal ways of living, and form temporary sexual alliances; men seldom get V.D. from a professional prostitute; such girls take good care not to risk getting it, as it would put them out of business, but ignorant girls, with no sense of sexual morality, can get the disease from an infected young man and spread it. I know of a case of a little girl of sixteen who has given it to eight soldiers, and possibly others; these boys, irresponsible and foolish, in turn have spread it to other girls.

For all practical purposes, venereal disease can be caught in only one way, that is, by sexual intercourse; it cannot, like many diseases, be caught from the air; in a few cases it is caught by kissing an infected person or by using a drinking vessel or towel used by an infected person. But usually it is safe to say that it is caught from sexual intercourse and that if people avoid intercourse with strangers or people of loose, irresponsible characters, they are safe; of course, wives who are completely honourable can get it from husbands who have been living in a loose way and having intercourse with girls they have picked up casually, and, far more rarely, a man can get it from his wife who has been unfaithful to him.

Venereal disease shows itself, first, by a discharge from the sexual organs and a feeling of burning or itching. There are many discharges which are quite harmless, but it is most unwise to neglect a discharge of any sort; even if it is "harmless" it is always a sign of a rundown or unhealthy condition, and is always unpleasant and embarrassing and it may be a symptom of venereal disease. Later the disease may lead to complete loss of health, inability to work and support oneself, such dreadful disfigurement that one hesitates to describe it, blindness, insanity and finally death; the children born of infected parents may be born blind, deformed or mentally deficient, and many cases of childlessness are caused by venereal infection.

I know it is humiliating to visit a doctor and tell him that one has risked venereal infection; but the fact remains that if help is sought early enough, a cure is certain and marriage and healthy parenthood possible; if there is delay, treatment by a doctor will be inevitable and may then be useless. The danger of venereal disease is not only that it will, if neglected, ruin one's own life, but can easily ruin others, too; it is perhaps the worst of all the racial diseases and carries with it the judgment "unto the third and fourth generation" mentioned in the Commandments.

It is illegal to buy quack or even useful medicines from a chemist for the treatment of venereal disease; it must be treated by a doctor or at a clinic or, in its further stages, at a hospital. The addresses of clinics are in most public lavatories, but one's own private doctor will immediately tackle the problem if applied to.

To some who read this book it may seem fantastic to add the following bit of information, but I can assure them that it is not. Many people believe that any man suffering from any form of V.D. can cure himself by having sexual intercourse with a virgin. This is absolutely untrue and nonsensical; it is almost sure to give the disease to the unfortunate girl and may produce an infected baby; it may also make the man himself made gravely ill, since intercourse with a virgin is never very easy and may, if the man has a sore on the penis, make it very much worse and increase his own danger. I have met numerous cases of very young girls being forcibly raped by young men who believed this ridiculous idea. If anyone who reads this has it, I beg him to ask any doctor whose authority he trusts and he will bear out what I say.

Another curious and widespread idea is that any sufferer from two diseases—leprosy and venereal disease—is put to death by doctors in hospital. I am often solemnly assured that such patients are “smothered” in a special ward in a hospital as soon as their condition is known to the doctors in charge. All I can do is to assure such people that there is no doctor in the English-speaking world who could do such a thing or who could hasten any patient's death without risking a charge of murder or manslaughter. I wish the government could do some propaganda on both these points; much V.D. is spread by that idea of intercourse with a virgin, and many people resist treatment frantically as they are convinced that it means death. I think that perhaps very few doctors realize how widespread these ideas are; they do not get quite so much of the confidence of patients as the impersonal “Aunt Martha” of the correspondence column like myself—most people can put in a letter terrors they would never dare to confess by word of mouth.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Another very widespread misconception is that medical examination for the Services or certain other jobs will reveal the fact that a girl has “gone too far” or, in other words, is no longer a virgin. Girls called up for the Services, girls wishing to

become hospital nurses, and, in some factories, girls wishing to work amongst food or in laundries, are required to pass a medical examination. This is a very wise provision; but a girl's virginity is not important in such cases. For the Services and hospital work, lungs, heart, eyes, hearing and feet, as well as general fitness, are important; for work in food factories and laundries, the skin and the cleanliness of the hair are what interests the medical examiner. In no case whatever does such an examination concern a girl's sexual organs.

INJECTIONS

Women often tell me that their doctor has ordered injections for various troubles—skin diseases, debility, childlessness and so on—and that they have never gone to him again because they think an "injection" means some interference by the doctor with the vagina. Injections mean only a very slight prick with a needle to inject something into the vein or, in some cases, into the muscle. I think this misconception has come about because many doctors and nurses say cheerily "I'm going to give you a little prick now" to prepare the patient for a slight pain, and the patient thinks a colloquial word in use amongst schoolboys is meant.

OPERATIONS AND CHILDBIRTH

Many people think that serious internal operations undergone by some women (removal of an ovary, or of part of the womb, for instance) mean a complete cessation of all sexual feeling on the woman's part and usually the stoppage of sexual intercourse entirely. Others, whose ideas are not quite so wholesale, have no idea when sexual life can be resumed after such an operation.

It is quite true that a very serious operation will, to some extent, make a woman's sexual organs less sensitive and the jarring of a large area of nerves round the centre of the operation will cause a certain amount of insensitiveness; but sexual feeling will not disappear and few operations make a woman incapable of sexual intercourse. The time at which married life can be resumed varies with different cases, and it is always wise to ask the doctor on his last visit; he will not, as a rule, volunteer any information on the subject. I have asked several doctors why they do not tell patients exactly when they can have intercourse after a major operation, and they tell me that

it is because so many women patients are shocked or distressed by the mention of sex.

Sexual intercourse after childbirth can usually be resumed after forty-two days, or after all discharge has stopped; but it is unwise to resume it without birth control precautions at first, because no woman wants two babies in twelve months; it is by no means safe always to trust to breast-feeding as a means of birth control. Many women have periods while breast-feeding.

ROMAN CATHOLICS

Some Roman Catholics write to me asking for birth control advice and I am forced to tell them that they must first see their priest or a Catholic doctor; I do not like to take the responsibility of advising Catholics to do something that I consider right, but which is forbidden by the laws of their Church. Many of them rely on what is called the "safe" period for intercourse, but doctors vary so much in their belief in this safe period that I would not dare to pronounce any opinion about it. All I know is that I would not rely on it; moreover, it seems very illogical to me to refuse to use scientific methods of birth control on the grounds that it is immoral to prevent conception, yet to use a scientifically doubtful method in the hope that the result will be the same. Catholic doctors have told me that they would not give birth control advice even to prevent the conception of diseased children or to save the life of a wife; others have refused to give me any definite ruling. It is a problem that cannot be solved by a non-Catholic like myself; it is a matter for the priest's ruling and the enquirer's own conscience. The problem of the Protestant woman married to a Catholic husband is a much more difficult one; she is not forbidden to practise birth control, he is; she has to bear the children, he, as a rule, to support them. It is very high-handed for a woman to make her husband a partner in something he considers wrong, by practising birth control without his consent or knowledge; it is just as high-handed, I think, for him to risk making her pregnant when she does not want to be. This again is a problem on which I feel incompetent to give any help.

CHANGE OF LIFE

Many women dislike intercourse for the months or years during which the menopause, or change of life, hangs about;

this is only natural. For one thing, if a woman has not enjoyed intercourse very much all her life, she has probably become bored to death by it when she reaches the age of forty-five to fifty; also, since the change means that she is ceasing to produce the eggs from which new life is formed, the actually instinctive desire for intercourse will probably pass away; but the emotional and individual desire may increase and the sex act become more enjoyable to her when the danger of child-bearing has passed and her emotions switch over from it to a personal love for her husband. A man who wants to keep his wife's love will be very careful not to distress her by demands she does not wish to meet at this time; but at the same time a wife will, if she is sensible and in love with her man, try to switch her interest in intercourse more from the physical plane on to something deeper.

DIAGRAMS

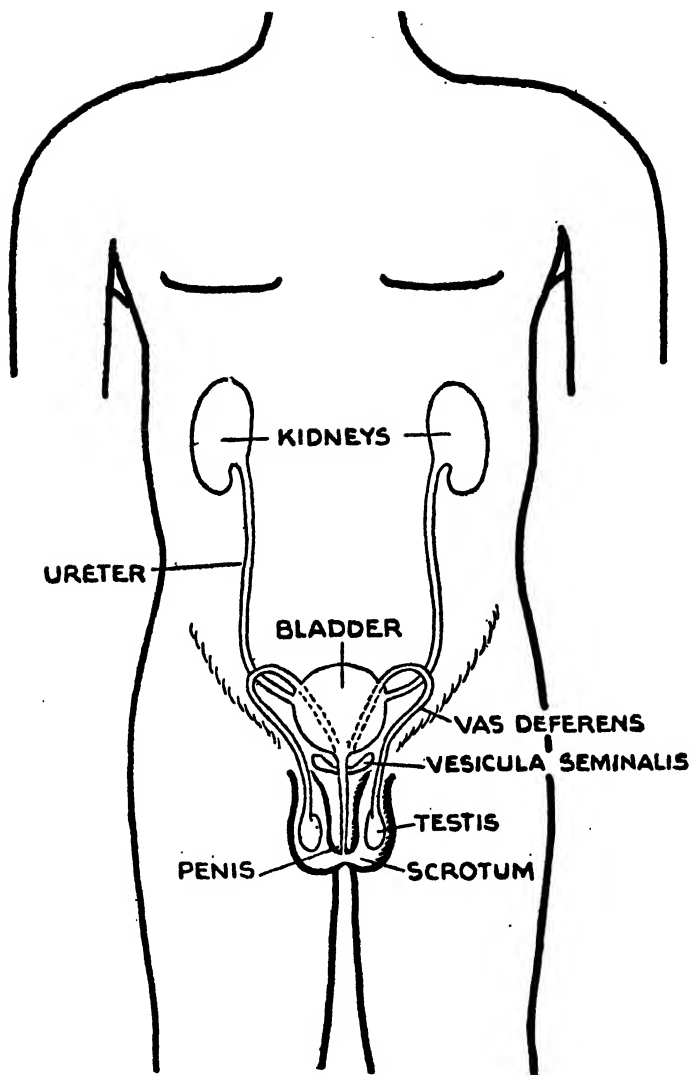


DIAGRAM OF MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

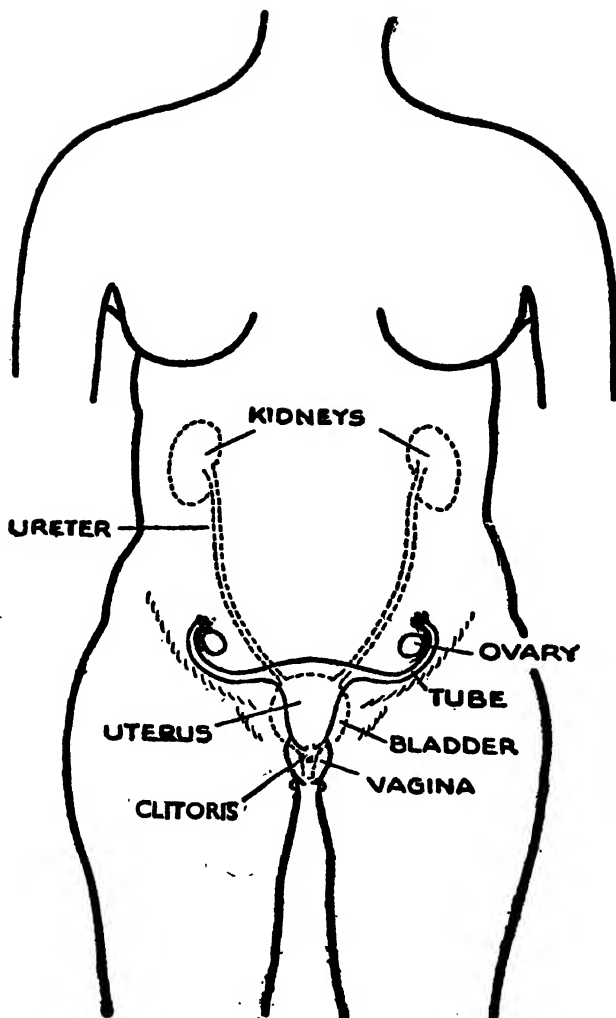
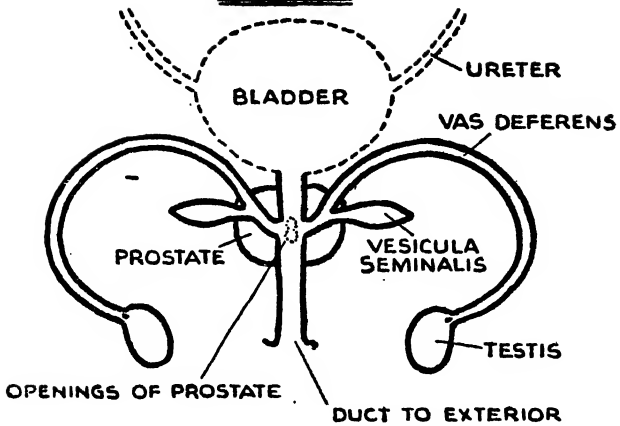


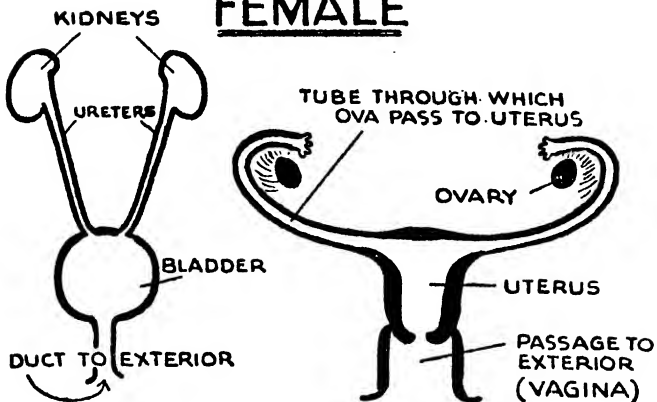
DIAGRAM OF FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Note : The kidneys, ureters, bladder and its passage to the exterior are in dotted outline. The reproductive organs are seen in continuous line. The bladder and its passage lie in front of the uterus and vagina

MALE



FEMALE



MALE AND FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS:
EXPLANATORY DIAGRAM

